In honour of a legend

WHEN ICONS MET … Namibian struggle icon Herman Andimba Toivo ya Toivo and former President of South Africa Nelson Rolihlahla ‘Madiba’ Mandela spent years together on Robben Island as political prisoners. The photo was taken on 6 May 2010 when Ya Toivo visited Mandela at his office.
S

WAPO lawmaker Kazenambo Kazenambo is given to easy outbursts of emotions. But he is hardly a rabble-rouser. In fact, while most politicians evoke rhetoric to whip up fervour for their cause, the former minister often lets rip at his own expense. Thus, his outbursts cannot be dismissed as the calculated rants of a politician.

It was thus telling when in April this year KK took a swipe at his own party, Swapo, for not treating the founder of their party, Herman Andimba Toivo ya Toivo, with the respect he deserves.

Kazenambo was joined by another of the ruling party’s younger leaders, Peya Mushelenga, in lamenting that the former liberation movement has hugely underplayed Ya Toivo’s place in the country’s freedom.

Mushelenga, the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, complained that Ya Toivo was more revered in South Africa than in his country, for which he probably suffered more at the hands of the apartheid regime than any Swapo leader could claim.

Despite the undercurrents of why Swapo and the government of independent Namibia have overlooked Ya Toivo in the many expensive accolades showered on a few of their leaders, we, at The Namibian, were still shocked when founding President Sam Nujoma pointedly declined a request for a tribute to Ya Toivo in this publication.

We still do not know what to make of it and can only hope our first President was ill-advised.

The Nelson Mandela Foundation jumped at the opportunity to honour Ya Toivo on his 90th birthday, saying Madiba himself would have gone to great lengths to acknowledge the feats of his fellow Robben Island prisoner, whom he described as a “formidable freedom fighter”.

President Hifikepunye Pohamba delivered his part like a statesman would.

Long-term comrades and friends of Ya Toivo added their voices to celebrate what is undoubtedly another milestone in the life of an icon.

No living Namibian could possibly claim to have played a more pivotal role in the liberation of Namibia at the time when Ya Toivo led a few others to first form an organisation to oppose the slavish migrant labour system and then to agitate for the total freedom of its citizens.

For someone who has achieved so much, Ya Toivo is modest if you follow what he says in this supplement and what he has said since his activism became public in the 1950s.

Even his apartheid enemies, while vilifying him, would not denigrate his status in the push for the independence of then South West Africa.

Unclassified intelligence files of the apartheid regime refer to Ya Toivo as a “martyr leader”, a “very good orator” with an above average intelligence.

One part states: “Ya Toivo has since his incarceration (on Robben Island) not relented his anti-white point of view. He is surly, moody and shows no respect or cooperation. He refuses to communicate with any official and his general behaviour is poor. He does not submit to any authority and is unsatisfied to be in held in a South African prison.

His general prognosis can be described as bad and there is no question about any form of rehabilitation. He is embittered and hardened.”

Dear comrades and friends

I AM grateful to be given this opportunity to greet you on my 90th birthday. I most sincerely thank the Namibian people for the outpouring of love and best wishes that you have showered on me as I approached this milestone.

I am proud to be part of a generation of men and women who were able to achieve the noble goal that we set for ourselves: to liberate our motherland and to restore our dignity as equal members of the human family. We followed in the footsteps of our brave ancestors, who were prepared to sacrifice their lives to challenge foreign domination and oppression.

The key to our success was that we succeeded to unite the peoples of our land in a common vision. Out of the darkest era emerged the beautiful idea that we are all Namibians. Inspired by this idea, we reached the first goal of our struggle: an independent and sovereign Namibia. This is the foundation on which we must build in order to achieve the well-being of our people.

In the recent weeks, many have asked me how I managed to survive repeated detentions, torture and imprisonment. I can only say that I vowed to myself not to allow my oppressors, torturers and captors to defeat me. I had no doubt that we would succeed. Namibians are not losers. I knew that I was not alone and we were not alone in our struggle. We knew that the decent people of the world were on our side.

I am confident that the succeeding generations will have the courage to dedicate themselves to the next phase of our struggle: to end poverty and inequality. This noble goal can also be achieved through unity and commitment. We must hold hands with our brothers and sisters not only in Namibia, but across the globe, to reach this goal.

I am a happy person today because the gift of long life has enabled me to enjoy the Independence of the Land of the Brave for the past 24 years. Many of those who wanted to destroy me physically and mentally have passed on, but I am still here. I continue to exercise every morning and to work to achieve my set objectives every day. I urge the young people to follow this example.

To the youth and students, I ask you to dedicate yourself to hard work and to struggle against selfishness and greed. Be honest and stay focused... The struggle to develop our beloved Namibia and to share its wealth among all of our people will take longer than the political struggle, but where there is a will, there is always a way."

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This supplement is our contribution to Namibia and Namibians, so that we remember what drove our forebears and continue to strive for freedom and justice with care for fellow human beings and the environment that we live in.

Tangeni Anupadhi
Editor

A message from Andimba Toivo ya Toivo

Foreword

Herman andimba Toivo ya Toivo aT 90 Herman andimba Toivo y a Toivo aT 90
SPECIAL FRIENDS ... Andimba Toivo ya Toivo's relationship with the former Editor of The Namibian, Gwen Lister, dates back to years before independence of Namibia. As a result, the two meet from time to time and when Ya Toivo retired from active politics he took up the challenge of being an editor of the paper for one day.

Photos: Tanja Bause and Sheefeni Nikodemus

For Andimba at 90

From humble roots in Omangundu the young man that was you dreamed of liberation to get your country back. In a journey spanning decades moving mountains for a cause, and inspiring many to do the same. Defiant in the dock along with compatriots you berated the colonisers who responded with draconian ire. When you look back do you miss the camaraderie you shared on the Island? Do you revisit the hopes and dreams you had as you stared out to sea to think of home as it might be, when free? Did you ever wonder if the sacrifice would be in vain? And even there (prisoner in a foreign land) and in a lonely cell after torture, interrogation, incarceration, they could not break your spirit with their blows. Though they blacked out the windows so you could not see the sun, still you refused to bow. When they said 'South West Africa' you retorted with 'Namibia' and stood your ground. 'Formidable freedom fighter' was how Mandela spoke of your resolve. Though guns and guards and metal bars kept you distant the thought of you inspired us all. And when your day of liberty came on a dusty March day on home soil in Katutura your light and spirit showed you had overcome, and won your personal fight against apartheid.

Then the world wanted to see you and I marvelled at your humility on other shores when they honoured you with rousing cheers in Harlem and you made me stand up too. Then came a time when a young man’s dream came true: a country too, was free. And as you take time now for reverie, and contemplation of all that was and is and could have been. Remind us to remember – icon that you are - what it was all about. That we may never forget why we wanted what we did: from a free people must come a goodness for and in us all.

From Gwen

On the Role of Gwen Lister in Namibia’s Struggle for Independence

Ms. Gwen Lister’s role in the struggle for Namibia’s independence as a journalist was immeasurable. Because of her courageous stance in defence of SWAPO, she had to part company with her former boss, Johannes Smith. After the founding of the Namibian, Gwen Lister continued to fight in the liberation struggle with her pen, which was her gun, on the media front, together with her staff. SWAPO leaders who stood with her included Cdes Nico Bossinger Daniel Tjongaroro, Jeremiah Nambinge, Philip Tarje, Rev. (now Bishop) Kamaqoa, the late Rev. H. Witbooi, Gottlieb Nathanial, Anton Lubowsky, Harmut Ruppel.

In a democratic society, a journalist, and the media generally, has the right to tell the truth as he/she or they see it or to criticize any public figure who has made a mistake, whether a Minister, a civil servant or even the President. Although we may not agree with every position taken by a journalist, we must respect his or her right to criticize, provided that the journalist writes ethically and with integrity. It is indisputable that Gwen has demonstrated a high level of ethics and integrity during her career as a journalist, even if, like any human being, she sometimes made mistakes.

In my view, Gwen Lister deserves a national award for her bravery because of the stand that she took in defence of SWAPO and the liberation struggle.

Gwen, your contribution to the struggle was to help to popularise SWAPO and to justify the armed liberation struggle worldwide. Your remarkable contribution cannot be separated from the history of the liberation struggle of Namibia.

– Andimba Toivo ya Toivo
7 November 2011
Tribute to Comrade Andimba Toivo ya Toivo on the Special Occasion of His 90th Birthday Anniversary

by H.E. Hifikepunye Pohamba, President of the Republic of Namibia

It is a great honour for me to pay tribute to Comrade Herman Andimba Toivo ya Toivo on the auspicious occasion of his 90th birthday anniversary celebration. Comrade Ya Toivo is one of the stalwarts of Namibia's national liberation struggle. In the late 1950s, he played a crucial role as a founder member, in fact the main force, behind the creation of OPO, the forerunner of Swapo.

For his strong beliefs and convictions, he endured arrest, imprisonment, detention and harassment at the hands of the colonial authorities. He was among many Namibian freedom fighters who were incarcerated in the notorious Robben Island Prison, where he was jailed for 16 years, enduring long periods of solitary confinement and other forms of harsh treatment.

The struggle for Namibia’s independence required leaders with nerves of steel. It needed unwavering and principled freedom fighters, who were ready to stand their ground in the face of unrelenting attacks and threats to their personal safety by the colonial regime. Andimba Toivo ya Toivo is one of such leaders. He personifies courage and steadfast commitment to the cause.

During the trial at which Ya Toivo and his co-accused were sentenced to imprisonment, he articulated the fundamental principles as a dedicated freedom fighter. I would like to quote a few sentences from the statement he made from the dock during the trial. He said “I am a loyal Namibian and I could not betray my people to their enemies. I admit that I decided to assist those who had taken up arms. I know that the struggle will be long and bitter. I also know that my people will wage that struggle, whatever the cost. Only when we are granted our independence will the struggle stop.” He continued. “Only when our human dignity is restored to us, as equals of the whites, will there be peace between us.”

These words demonstrate not only courage, but the character of a man who was ready to give up everything for the sake of the freedom and independence of his Motherland.

Throughout his life, both before and after the attainment of our freedom and independence, Comrade Ya Toivo has made immense contributions to our nation and its history. His work as a senior government minister in various portfolios, founding member of parliament and as a community leader has been exemplary and greatly enriched our nation. Over the years, he distinguished himself as a leader of strong character, with an indomitable spirit and unwavering belief in the power of justice, equality and dignity of all human beings.

On the occasion of his 90th birthday anniversary, I take this opportunity, on behalf of the government and people of the Republic of Namibia, my family and indeed on my own behalf, to wish Comrade Ya Toivo a happy birthday celebration. We congratulate you and your family on this important milestone and wish you many happy returns. Yours has been an exemplary life. A blessed life. And, a life well-lived. Once again, congratulations.

Hifikepunye Pohamba
President
“QUITE militant”. This is how Nelson Mandela once described Andimba Toivo ya Toivo, with whom he spent around ten years in the same section on Robben Island.

Two years after he was released, Madiba recalled Ya Toivo in a conversation with Richard Stengel, who collaborated with him on his autobiography ‘Long Walk to Freedom’. “He was quite militant,” Madiba said. “He wanted very little to do with whites, with the warders.”

While the other Namibian prisoners were briefly held in what became known as the ‘punishment’ wing of the prison, Ya Toivo was the only one with Madiba and other comrades in B Section. B Section was one arm of a U-shaped construction, while the ‘punishment’ section formed the other, placing them parallel to each other. For most of their time on Robben Island, the other Namibians were held in the communal cells, known as D Section.

In an extensive series of recorded conversations, which are housed in the Nelson Mandela Foundation’s archive in Johannesburg, Madiba detailed the system which graded all prisoners into privilege-related rungs. The system started at D Group for all prisoners and went all the way up to A Group which allowed for the most privileges such as having contact visits and being allowed to buy groceries. He said that while some people “behaved very well” in order to be promoted, Ya Toivo was different.

“Andimba was not concerned about that,” Madiba said. “He didn’t care to be promoted and he wouldn’t cooperate with the authorities at all in almost everything.”

“We did persuade him that he has many people there who want to be looked after – because his people were in D Section and we felt it was his duty, you know, to speak, to have the conditions of his people improved – and that we thought he should play a more active role in that regard.”

While Ya Toivo and his comrades from Namibia were on Robben Island from early 1968, they were brought to the punishment section in May 1971. Madiba and his comrades got to hear that the Namibians had embarked on a hunger strike because of their isolation and started their own in solidarity.

At the time the prison was run by the notorious commanding officer colonel Piet Badenhorst, and conditions were brutal. The solidarity hunger strike angered the warders, who on 28 May 1971 embarked on a raid of B Section. Madiba and his comrades were stripped and made to stand in the icy winter night for some time while their cells were searched. They only stopped their tormenting when Govan Mbeki collapsed. The next day Madiba and his comrades heard that the Namibians had been beaten up. Ya Toivo, who Madiba called in his autobiography, “a formidable freedom fighter,” had hit back and knocked down a warder.

Madiba left Robben Island on 31 March 1982, two years before Ya Toivo was released after having served 16 years of a 20 year sentence. In his famous rejection on 10 February 1985 of President PW Botha’s offer to release him if he renounced violence, Madiba, who had then served 22 years in jail, said, through his daughter Zindzi: “Only free men can negotiate. Prisoners cannot enter into contracts. Herman Toivo ya Toivo, when freed, never gave any undertaking, nor was he called upon to do so.” After his release from prison in 1990 Madiba stayed in touch with Ya Toivo who visited him at both his home and office in recent years.
Through thick and thin

YVONNE AMUKWAYA

A UNEXPECTED encounter, while on their way to an Angela Davis rally in the mid-80s in New York, eventually led to a lifelong commitment for Vicki Erenstein (now Ya Toivo) and Andimba Toivo ya Toivo.

The couple met in 1984, just seven months after Andimba ya Toivo was released from Robben Island Prison, while he was in New York to attend the United Nations General Assembly. Mrs Ya Toivo had invited Lucía Hamutenya, a Namibian friend who worked at the office of the UN Commissioner for Namibia, to attend a rally to be addressed by Angela Davis, a communist lawyer, university lecturer and former political prisoner. Her friend asked if she could bring two Namibian friends along.

Then a labour lawyer and political activist, Vicki Erenstein was working closely with the ANC and Swapo. Ya Toivo was no stranger when she met him. Recalling their first meeting, Mrs Ya Toivo said: “As Andimba climbed into the car, I was in shock. He was well-known to me, since we had been campaigning for his freedom. I just could not believe that I was actually meeting him.” A Namibian graduate student, Leake Hangala, accompanied him.

Thereafter the two met by chance at the Swapo office and at a UN reception, just exchanging greetings. However, one day, a secretary in the Swapo office in New York phoned her on behalf of Ya Toivo and invited her to meet him.

“I thought we were going to meet to discuss our US solidarity work with Swapo, but he got right to the point, as he usually does, expressing his attraction to me and proposed that we start seeing each other on a personal basis,” shared Mrs Ya Toivo.

Tacking a further stroll down memory lane, Mrs Ya Toivo gloved as she shared the story of her first African dress.

“I was phoned on a very hot day to retrieve a parcel from the Swapo office, which was not far from the offices of my law firm. Andimba had sent me an African dress that he had purchased in Zimbabwe. As soon as I opened my parcel, I changed clothes and marched back to my office proudly wearing my new (and very cool) African dress.”

While many couples know that they are bound to spend the rest of their lives together, Mrs Ya Toivo said, “I did not enter the relationship with the view that we would marry. But as we grew closer and closer, I knew that I wanted to spend the rest of my life with him. We decided that we would marry at an appropriate time and would live together in an independent Namibia.”

In 1989, the Communist Party of the Soviet Union had invited Andimba for a rest programme at a sanatorium. Andimba got permission to take me along. We decided that we would try to get married during this visit. We met in Moscow and had thorough medical checkups, followed by a visit of about 14 days to a sanatorium in the Crimea on the Black Sea and to Kiev. It was amazing. It was like having a honeymoon before our wedding,” reminisced Mrs Ya Toivo.

The couple expressed their desire to marry to the director of the sanatorium, and he agreed happily to make the arrangements, including a small reception. However, shortly before the scheduled date, the couple was informed that the wedding could not be arranged because they could not comply with the Soviet Union’s legal requirements for marriage within the time period of their stay.

The two were able to meet later in the same year, in Namibia, when Mrs Ya Toivo was part of a group of lawyers who came to observe the election campaign and the actual election. While in Windhoek, she spent as much time with him as with her fiancé as possible. They decided that they would marry at the time of independence.

“We wanted to get married on Independence Day but Andimba had too many responsibilities and there was no time. We ended up getting married a week after independence at the Magistrate’s Court.”

From then onwards, it was only a question of when she would be able to move to Namibia permanently. However, it was not an easy time.

“My father had just passed away in 1989 and my mother was very ill at the time that we married. My brother, who was not married, became critically ill while my mother was on her deathbed. I had to be with them.” Thus, Mrs Ya Toivo could not move to Namibia immediately.

“My mother passed away while my brother was in the intensive care unit, on life support. He remained in a critical condition for a period of six months, but managed miraculously to survive and to live for another 10 years. I was able to move to Namibia, in August 1991, only after he completed a long period of rehabilitation.”

By the time Mrs Ya Toivo moved permanently to Namibia, she already had 18 years of legal practice in New York. She said that when she came to Namibia, she had the idea of contributing to the development of the nation as a lawyer, but many people took it for granted that she was going to be a housewife.

“I had a hard time finding employment, even with my academic qualifications and years of experience in legal practice, and Andimba is not a man to use his position to obtain personal favours,” she shared. She finally was appointed to a position in the Attorney General’s office approximately 10 months after settling permanently in Windhoek.

In 1991, the couple were blessed with twin daughters, Matuleni and Nakashiko, whom they raised with their three adopted children.

“When I moved here, I was instantly a mother. My husband had three small boys living with him—two were his sister’s sons and the other was a boy whom he had taken in as a small child in Angola. We were soon joined by Kuku Nashikoto Elizabeth Malema, Andimba’s mother.”

Mrs Ya Toivo tackled her role as a mother, a wife, a career woman and then later also as an active community woman and leader, with enthusiasm.

“My husband is very hardworking, and in the early days, he travelled a lot both within Namibia and abroad, as Minister of Mines and Energy. Before I started working, I accompanied him on some of his local trips to the mines. In addition, we travelled frequently with the boys, both on weekends to visit family and friends.”

“Once we were eight months old, the couple travelled to the United States to visit her family in different states, and they stayed in Cuba for three days on the same trip. They travelled alone with the girls, and cared for them themselves. Mrs Ya Toivo tried to ensure that the family spent as much time together under the very demanding circumstances of her husband’s schedule. She introduced into his life the ritual of an annual family vacation at the end of the year. The couple managed to take a one-month vacation with the children almost every year, mainly in Namibia, but also in Cape Town, and while her brother was alive, in the US. Her husband also accompanied her to New York in 2005 when she ran the New York marathon for the first time. She said that while the Namibian people in general have a high degree of respect for Ya Toivo, there were times when rumours were spread or unpleasant things appeared in the papers about her. But she had been counselled by one of her husband’s former Robben Island Prison colleagues before marriage, who told her that her husband had instructed her to not discredit her husband. “He had told me that these things were political and that in politics these things happen. We never took them personally.”

“I moved here when I was 26 years old. Mrs Ya Toivo, who described herself as a courageous politician with integrity and the friendliest person in Namibia, said that her husband’s dream of liberating his motherland has been achieved but that the struggle still continues.

“My husband’s primary mission was to liberate his motherland. He is happy and proud that this was achieved. However, he envisages a longer struggle to achieve the economic emancipation and well-being of all Namibians,” she said.

“Andimba represents important values that are crucial to the achievement of Namibia’s goals. He is a dedicated, hardworking, humble and selfless and has demonstrated integrity, humility and great commitment to his people. These are qualities that need to be promoted and that the youth should emulate.”

She said that throughout his life her husband has promoted solidarity among Namibia’s different ethnic groups and tolerance of differing opinions, which is of great importance to international solidarity. “He has dedicated his life to the service of people and he’s given enough time and effort to try to live up to in their own ways.”

Asked how the journey has been, Mrs Ya Toivo said, “It has been rich, adventurous, challenging and has had its ups and downs, but mostly, it has been wonderful. I have been part of something wonderful and so have our children.”

GROOVE ... Andimba and Vicki on the dance floor shortly after the City of Windhoek renamed a street in his honour. Several towns in Namibia have named streets after him with the most recent one being Katimba Mullu.

Photo: Henry van Roi
**Andimba, I hope to have the privilege of having you at our side for many years to come. Keep it up.**

— Vicki

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**To my husband Andimba**

FOR twenty years, you have been my lover, partner and comrade. Your love for me as your wife has given me great happiness. You have also shared with me your vast reserve of love: of life; of people; of politics; of family; of Namibian culture; of learning of adventure. You are a man who is secure and without petty jealousy. When asked by friends how you are, you usually respond, “I’m on top of the world as usual.” When presented with a challenge, you never hesitate, but simply say, “Where there’s a will, there’s a way.” And you mean it! This is how I know and love you.

The honest, determined, democratic-minded, loyal and humble Andimba Toivo ya Toivo known to the public is known in the same way to family and friends. As a husband, you are loving, open-minded and tolerant. Your wisdom, generosity of spirit and fearlessness guide me as I navigate the unknown and sometimes turbulent currents of my adopted Namibia.

As a father, your love and devotion to Isak, Philemon, Nashikoto and Mutaleni give them an anchor and strong guidance; you have taught them the importance of showing respect for every person, being honest, focusing on goals and working hard. You savour all the joys and wonders of raising your young daughters and have never hesitated to share the daily responsibilities of parenting.

To me, you have the distinction of being the friendliest person in Namibia. You have the extraordinary talent to show an interest in everyone you meet, to ask questions, to retain the information gained and to stay in touch. You never tire of visiting sick friends, sharing bereavement or happy occasions or simply phoning to say “hello.” Many friends come to you for help and counselling, and you are always willing to assist. It is a never-ending source of amazement to travel with you throughout this country that you love so much. Wherever we go, you are received warmly by people from every walk of life who count themselves among your personal friends. The same is true wherever we have visited outside of Namibia.

Andimba, I hope to have the privilege of having you at our side for many years to come.

Keep it up, Vicki

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**A tribute to my father**

A MAN revered who sacrificed the majority of his life in order to liberate his country from South Africa. A man who endured the tortures and brutality of the Apartheid Era. A man whom many consider to be a hero, someone even refer to him as the “silent hero”. A politician he once was, humble and charismatic in his own way. That is all most people get to see of him. On the other hand, I am going to tell you about my father Andimba Toivo ya Toivo, the man I know. I will give you a bit of insight into who he really is.

Andimba Toivo ya Toivo and Vicki ya Toivo bore two beautiful twin daughters. My father a.k.a. ‘Papa’ is the strongest man I know, physically and mentally fit. I remember when my sister and I were younger; our father would on occasion have us accompany him at four in the morning on rather strenuous walks up and down our hill, which ultimately turned into a jog. Sometimes it was voluntary. We could never understand how our father was able to go to bed so late and still manage to wake up so absurdly early. We then concluded it was simply his daily routine. My father has never ceased to amaze me and inspired me to be the best in whichever way possible.

He is a man who thrives on adventure and is well-travelled. My father made sure that as a family we experienced it all. Funerals, weddings, birthdays and holidays. Many a time would be spent travelling long distances at the back of the car, on account of me being the smallest! I shall definitely never forget those trips. As a family we have travelled more than many could ever wish for and for that I am thankful. It has shaped me into a well-rounded person, and in the process we have created wonderful memories.

Throughout my life I have always appreciated my parents and have over the years come to understand how privileged I am. ‘Papa’ faces all challenges head-on; even if it means being in the line of fire. A workaholic to say the least, he always tends to other people’s needs before he attends to his own. My father, my friend, someone I will always look up to and admire. He has taught me respect, moral values, work ethic and to face any adversity that life throws at me, a true educator of life.

My father has counselled my sister and me, and made sure that we received the best education possible. Education and the pruning of the “born-frees” is a key factor as we are the generation who need to follow in the footsteps of my father as well as many others. We need to ensure that their legacies continue.

The amount of gratitude I have for my father is simply unimaginable. I can only hope to one day be half as brave and wise as my father is. Thank you for truly being an inspiration to all, myself included, and for being the number one man in my life!

I hope you enjoy your birthday to the fullest as it is a milestone not many have. The pleasure of celebrating. May your day be filled with much love, happiness and blessings all round.

Tate, onda pandalu, tungi une. Evalo iyo ne nkukumebeklele. Translates to: Tate, thank you very much. Happy Birthday.

Nashikoto ya Toivo

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**Mutaleni’s tribute to Papa**

THE FAMILY ... Andimba and Vicki with their daughters Nashikoto (left) and Mutaleni (right). They have also raised several other family children.

THE FAMILY ... Andimba and Vicki with their daughters Nashikoto (left) and Mutaleni (right). They have also raised several other family children.
The prisoner's adaptation and behaviour remained bad and gradually became worse. It was clear that he did not want to abide by the discipline in prison. On 20 June 1971 he swore at the member in charge of the section, sergeant Karsten, and threatened to assault him after the member told him to walk down a corridor.

"He refused to prepare for an inspection by the member in charge of the section, sergeant Karsten, and threatened to assault him after the member told him to walk down a corridor," the prison records indicate.

For instance, on 18 April 1970 Ya Toivo demanded that all Namibians be transferred back to their country and called for a drastic improvement of the medical services on Robben Island. The prisoner's adaptation and behaviour remained bad and gradually became worse. It was clear that he did not want to abide by the discipline in prison. On 20 June 1971 he swore at the member in charge of the section, sergeant Karsten, and threatened to assault him after the member told him to walk down a corridor. The prison records indicate.

He also refused to shave his beard when instructed, so as a result it was put in solitary confinement for one year. He drafted a petition on behalf of the Namibian prisoners in September 1971 but it was pointed out to him that he could not speak on behalf of the group. The authorities told him that he could only speak on his own behalf but he reacted angrily to it.

"I accept what you have just told me. What I want to say is that the boat is ready to take you back to Holland. You came from there to steal our land. Remember, perhaps you and I will not be there anymore when the Africans take over, but your children will blame you for the manner in which you treated the Africans. You see this desk and chairs, this is the work of the black man. One of these days we will be sitting there."

The records continue to indicate that he said: "I am here as a leader and I will continue to act for my people. I will continue to say 'we', because I am doing my duty as a leader."

More such reactions could be seen when on 13 June 1981 after the prisoners played a soccer match Ya Toivo "tried to incite the prisoners by walking around with his fist in the air," according to the prison files. Similarly on 13 October 1981, he refused to prepare for an inspection by a magistrate and commanding officer. Such behavior led to his degrading from Group C to D in February 1982.

His behaviour remains bad, he has no respect for white members, he resists discipline and takes an aggressive stance when he is addressed," the authorities wrote in his file.

Three months later on 24 May 1982 Ya Toivo's behaviour was described as follows:

"Ya Toivo has since his incarceration not relented his anti-white point of view. He is surly, moody and shows no respect or cooperation. He refuses to communicate with any official and his general behaviour is poor. He does not summit to any authority and is unsatisfied to be held in a South African prison. His general prognosis can be described as bad and there is no question about any form of rehabilitation. He is embittered and hardened."

For all the time he was at the island, Ya Toivo received very few visitors.

Among those was his mother Elizabeth Malina ya Toivo who visited him on 27 July and 3 August 1974 and the late former president of Swamu, Moses Katjionguo, who visited him on 21 January 1983.

Toivo believed that Katjionguo visited him on the instructions of the DTA to perhaps try and convince him to join the party. A request by late freedom fighter Emil Appolus in June 1981 to visit him, was denied by prison authorities.

The files describe Ya Toivo as a "martyr leader", a "very good orator" with an above average intelligence.

Robben Island records reveal a moody, disrespectful Toivo

The recently declassified prison records of Namibia’s best-known Namibian prisoner and struggle icon, Andimba Toivo ya Toivo, have provided new insight into the life and struggles of his life during detention.

Ya Toivo’s time on the notorious island was marked by constant brawls with the prison authorities and they had a tough time dealing with him. In one instance he was described as “surly, moody and shows no respect or cooperation”, while he continuously threatened to deal with him.

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"The prisoner’s adaptation and behaviour remained bad and gradually became worse. It was clear that he did not want to abide by the discipline in prison. On 20 June 1971 he swore at the member in charge of the section, sergeant Karsten, and threatened to assault him after the member told him to walk down a corridor,“ the prison records indicate.

He also refused to shave his beard when instructed, so as a result it was put in solitary confinement for one year. He drafted a petition on behalf of the Namibian prisoners in September 1971 but it was pointed out to him that he could not speak on behalf of the group. The authorities told him that he could only speak on his own behalf but he reacted angrily to it.

"I accept what you have just told me. What I want to say is that the boat is ready to take you back to Holland. You came from there to steal our land. Remember, perhaps you and I will not be there anymore when the Africans take over, but your children will blame you for the manner in which you treated the Africans. You see this desk and chairs, this is the work of the black man. One of these days we will be sitting there."

The records continue to indicate that he said: "I am here as a leader and I will continue to act for my people. I will continue to say ‘we’, because I am doing my duty as a leader."

More such reactions could be seen when on 13 June 1981 after the prisoners played a soccer match Ya Toivo “tried to incite the prisoners by walking around with his fist in the air,” according to the prison files. Similarly on 13 October 1981, he refused to prepare for an inspection by a magistrate and commanding officer. Such behavior led to his de-grading from Group C to D in February 1982.

"His behaviour remains bad, he has no respect for white members, he resists discipline and takes an aggressive stance when he is addressed,” the authorities wrote in his file.

Three months later on 24 May 1982 Ya Toivo’s behaviour was described as follows:

"Ya Toivo has since his incarceration not relented his anti-white point of view. He is surly, moody and shows no respect or cooperation. He refuses to communicate with any official and his general behaviour is poor. He does not summit to any authority and is unsatisfied to be held in a South African prison. His general prognosis can be described as bad and there is no question about any form of rehabilitation. He is embittered and hardened.”

For all the time he was at the island, Ya Toivo received very few visitors. Among those was his mother Elizabeth Malina ya Toivo who visited him on 27 July and 3 August 1974 and the late former president of Swamu, Moses Katjionguo, who visited him on 21 January 1983.

Toivo believed that Katjionguo visited him on the instructions of the DTA to perhaps try and convince him to join the party. A request by late freedom fighter Emil Appolus in June 1981 to visit him, was denied by prison authorities.

The files describe Ya Toivo as a “martyr leader”, a “very good orator” with an above average intelligence.
Ya Toivo’s statement from the dock

URING his trial, which lasted from August 1967 to February 1968, Ya Toivo made a statement from the dock:

“We find ourselves here in a foreign country, convicted under laws made by people whom we have always considered as foreigners. We find ourselves tried by a judge who is not our countryman and who has not shared our background.

We are Africans and not South Africans. We do not now, and will not in the future, recognise your right to govern us, to make laws for us in which we have no say; to treat us as if it were your property and us as if you were our masters.

We are far away from our homes; not a single member of our families has come to visit us, never mind being wept over and buried.

The South African government has again shown its strength by detaining us for as long as it pleased, keeping some of us in solitary confinement for 301 years and bringing us to its capital to try us. It has shown its strength by passing an Act especially for us and having it made retrospective. It has even chosen an ugly name to call us by. One’s own are called patriots, or at least rebels; your opponents are called terrorists.

We know that whites do not think of blacks as politicians – only as agitators. Many of our people, through no fault of their own have had no education at all. This does not mean that they do not know what they want.

Our grievances are called ‘so-called’ grievances. We do not believe South Africa is in South West Africa in order to provide facilities and work for non-whites and for our own selfish reasons. For the first 40 years it did practically nothing to fulfil its ‘sacred trust’. It only concerned itself with the welfare of the whites.

Since 1962 because of the pressure from inside by the non-whites and especially my organisation, and because of the ruling party’s bad news everywhere threatened by the dark clouds of Nazism, I risked my life to defend both of them, wearing a uniform with orange banded arms.

But some of your countrymen when called to battle to defend civilisation resorted to sabotage against their own fatherland. I volunteered to face German bullets, and as a result of military installations, both in South West Africa and the Republic, was prepared to be the victim of their sabotage. Today they are facing the same day but I am called the coward.

When I consider my country, I am proud that my countrymen have taken up arms for freedom. We believe that South Africa has robbed us of our land, our country.

Is it surprising that in such times my countrymen have taken up arms? Violence is truly fearsome, but who would not defend his property and himself against a robber? And we believe that South Africa has robbed us of our country.

I have spent my life working in Swapo, which is an ordinary political party like any other.

My Lord, you found it necessary to brand me as a coward. During the Second World War, when it became evident that both my country and the world were threatened by the dark clouds of Nazism, I risked my life to defend both of them, wearing a uniform with orange banded arms.

I have no answer to the question: ‘Where has your non-violence got us?’ Whilst the World Court judgment was pending, I at least had that to fall back on. When we failed, after years of waiting, I had no answer to give to my people.

Even though I did not agree that people should go into the bush, I could not refuse to help them when I knew that they were hungry. When I considered the suffering of my people and I believe that anyone who calls himself a man would not despise them.

I am a loyal Namibian and I could not betray my people to their enemies. I admit that I decided to assist those who had taken up arms. I know that the struggle will be long and bitter. I also know that my people will wage that struggle, whatever the cost.

Only when we are granted our independence will the struggle stop. Only when our human dignity is restored to us, as equals of the whites, will there be peace between us.

My co-accused and I have suffered. We are not looking forward to our imprisonment.

We are not, however, feel that our efforts and sacrifices have been wasted. We believe that human suffering has its effect even on those who impose it.

We hope that what has happened will persuade the non-white leaders of South Africa that the world may be right and they may be wrong. Only when white South Africans realise this and act on it, will it be possible for us to stop men for freedom and justice in the land of our birth.”

‘Toivo was sentenced to twenty years’ imprisonment.”
Ya Toivo gave me Namibia

HILENE NEMBWAYA at ONAMHINDA

VETERAN politician Andimba Toivo Ya Toivo is regarded as a source of inspiration by many people at Odibo and the community highly values and respects what he has done for Namibia. Julia Mbida (whose age is estimated at over 97 years) from Onamhinda village in Odibo district, is one of the few elderly people who still remember Ya Toivo as a small boy. Mbida was a Sub B (Grade 2) teacher at St Mary’s Mission school when Ya Toivo, a lad with a strong Ndon-ga accent, first arrived at the school at Odibo in 1947, and from then she knew him very well.

"Ya Toivo found me here at Odibo when he came to St Mary’s and that time he was still young but a mature boy, who knew what he wanted to achieve. I watched him as he progressed in school. He also used to come to my house to play with my children since we were neighbours," says Mbida.

Mbida says when Ya Toivo arrived at Odibo he stayed at the late Petrus Ndongo’s homestead, before moving into the school hostel. She said Ya Toivo, who was a Lutheran, had to change his religion to Anglican to be admitted at St Mary’s and that time he was still young but a mature boy, who knew what he wanted to achieve. I watched him as he progressed in school. He also used to come to my house to play with my children since we were neighbours,” says Mbida.

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Mbida says Ya Toivo arrived at Odibo and the community highly values him. "He described Ya Toivo as a quiet and smart learner. He was a very polite, quiet boy and neat at the same time. I have never seen him angry or arguing with anyone. He was very peaceful and intelligent."

She says even though Ya Toivo was very bright at school, some of the missionaries were not happy with him and they tried to stop his education by sending him out to mould mud bricks. However, Ya Toivo was smart and never allowed anything to get in the way of his education.

He remained at St Mary’s Mission school for six years until he graduated as a teacher in 1950. Ya Toivo taught at St Guthbert’s school at Onamutayi for about six months before he transferred to St Mary’s, where he taught till the end of 1951. He left for South Africa to further his studies in November 1951.

Mbida, who is now blind and unable to walk on her own, still remembers when Ya Toivo first gave her a Swapo membership card before he went into exile.

"His business started to flourish and Ya Toivo became an established businessman in Ondangwa. He was really good at it," he says.

Hilundwa also remembers his school years at St Mary’s with the former liberation fighter at Odibo as if they happened yesterday, saying that life was hard in many aspects. They had to cook for themselves but often did not have food to eat.

"The struggle was real, our life in the hostel was a struggle because we never had a dining hall or a kitchen. We cooked ourselves. By that time we used to receive one tin of maize flour and a small piece of dried traditional spinach (ekaka) but it was never really enough," says Hilundwa.

Andimba Toivo Ya Toivo secondary school, Wardeh- hein Shapaka, Ya Toivo visits the school on an annual basis and has contributed a lot to its development. Ya Toivo’s last donation to the school was earlier this year, when he contributed an amount of N$5 000 and books for the learners.

"He tries to contribute something to the school every year. He mostly donates money, boxes of fish or reading books. We are really pleased with what he is contributing to our school and he really has the school at heart. He is a great leader," says Shapaka.

Andimba Toivo Ya Toivo school has about 847 pupils and 40 teachers.
First Minister of Mines and Energy

On the occasion of his 90th birthday on 22 August 2014, the Ministry of Mines and Energy is privileged and proud to pay tribute to its first minister, Herman Andimba Toivo ya Toivo, and congratulate him on his countless achievements.

Following Namibian independence, the Ministry of Mines and Energy was established under Ya Toivo’s leadership. The ministry comprised of the Directorates of Mining, Geological Survey of Namibia, Energy and Administration and Finance.

The Diamond Board, regulating and controlling the production, evaluation and security of diamonds since pre-independence times, was brought under the control of the Ministry of Mines and Energy, as were the National Energy Council, the national electricity utility NamPower, and the national oil company Namcor.

Under the direction and leadership of Ya Toivo the ministry immediately embarked upon a number of schemes with the following objectives:

- To administer the relevant legislation and exercise control over mineral, energy and other land-based resources.
- To maintain and promote regional and international cooperation in the mineral and energy sectors.
- To ensure sustainable development of all earth-based resources.
- To develop strategies for optimal land-use planning.
- To minimise the impact of the exploitation of Namibia’s mineral, energy and other land-based resources on the environment by ensuring development in a responsible way and in compliance with national policy and universally accepted practices and standards.
- To assess the impact of previous mining and development activities on the environment through baseline studies and to develop strategies to manage this impact.
- To develop multidisciplinary and integrated land-use planning, working closely with other ministries.
- To undertake research and disseminate relevant quality scientific data to address national issues related to resources, environment and hazards in earth science and energy-related matters, and
- To provide value for money and customer-oriented services to all stakeholders.
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Drafting of mining legislation appropriate for an independent Namibia also commenced, and culminated in the promulgation of the Minerals (Prospecting and Mining) Act No 33 in 1992.

Government through the Ministry of Mines and Energy also embarked upon an extensive rural electrification programme in order to bring electricity and development to the rural people of Namibia.

Major expansion of the electricity transmission and distribution network has taken place since, and a national electricity masterplan was compiled.

In 1992, construction work for the new, custom-built Ministry of Mines and Energy headquarters started with the Geological Survey of Namibia offices, as the existing facilities were completely inadequate for a modern research institution in an independent Namibia, and the comprehensive reference volume “The Mineral Resources of Namibia: A powerful tool to attract investment, was published by the Geological Survey of Namibia. In 1993, the government of Namibia and the European Union signed a 40 million Euro agreement under the Sysmin scheme for support to the Namibian mining industry, and the establishment of the Minerals Development Fund. A first licensing round was held in 1991 to promote hydrocarbon exploration, which attracted world-class companies to explore in Namibia. A further licensing round was held in 1994, before the licensing process was opened up in 1998.

In November 1994, a milestone was reached when agreements were signed between the government of Namibia and De Beers giving the Government a 50% stake in Consolidated Diamond Mines (CDM) and leading to the formation of Namibia’s leading diamond producer Namdeb as a joint venture between government and the private sector.

That same year the Geological Survey of Namibia’s programme of high-resolution airborne geophysical data surveys started, and has since produced one of the best and largest sets of geophysical data worldwide.

In 1995, the Minerals Ancillary Rights Commission was established, and the Ministry began the process of reviewing and substantially revising the existing diamond legislation, which culminated in the promulgation of the Diamond Act No 13 of 1999.

The Petroleum Laws Amendment Act, 1998, and the Model Petroleum Agreement, 1998, as well as the Petroleum Income Tax (PIT) and the Additional Profits Tax (APT) were gazetted in order to cater for economies and fiscal aspects and royalties, and the White Paper on Energy Policy was released. In 1996, the Minerals Board of Namibia was constituted in terms of the Minerals Act. Construction of the second part of the new headquarters at the site of the Geological Survey of Namibia commenced.

The building was completed and inaugurated in 1999, thereby creating an excellent one-stop facility for investors and stakeholders in the minerals, energy and earth science sectors.

Ya Toivo took over the position at the helm of the Ministry of Mines and Energy at a time when enthusiasm for the newly independent Namibia was paired with the overwhelming task of building a new Public Service commensurate with the new conditions of this young nation.

He mastered this difficult task with dedication and an admirable sense of duty. He united the staff of the ministry by building the “Mines and Energy family” and instilling a common desire to take Namibia to greater heights.

This he did not do by giving directions from the top, but rather by working alongside the staff and fostering a sense of belonging. His admirable humility regularly came to the forefront when he greeted visitors or new staff members by saying: “Good morning, I am Andimba Toivo ya Toivo, I work for the Ministry of Mines and Energy.”

However, in March 1999, the Ministry of Mines and Energy sadly had to bid farewell to its long-standing minister, as Ya Toivo left for the Ministry of Prisons and Correctional Services.

The achievements made in nine years under his skillful leadership reflect the foresight and vision of this dedicated leader, and many a staff member had tears in their eyes when he entered the room for his farewell function.

He said in a display of his wonderful sense of humor: “Good afternoon everybody, I am Andimba Toivo ya Toivo, I work for the Ministry of Prisons and Correctional Services!”

Today, we pay tribute to this true icon of the struggle for Namibian independence, who is also an icon of the formative years of our beloved nation. We wish him good health, God’s blessing and many more years with his loved ones. We express our gratitude and admiration for what he has done as the true father of the Ministry of Mines and Energy.

* Tribute done by the Ministry of Mines and Energy.

Proud Moment … Krupp Street in Windhoek was renamed to Andimba Toivo ya Toivo Street. Ya Toivo and wife Vicki with former Windhoek Mayor Mateus Shikongo.

Encouragement … As Minister of Mines he was known as a humble servant who would always make time to meet workers when visiting mining sites.

Recent … In the run up to mark Ya Toivo’s 90th birthday several public lectures were held throughout the country. Here he is seen with people who attended a lecture at Katutura Mulo in the Zambezi Region.
Prison authorities had to trick him out of the cell

S
Shortly after joining the African National Congress during the Defiance of Unjust Laws Campaign 1952, in South Africa, I began to be infatuated with wars of liberation in other parts of the world, particularly the African continent.

At the tender age of 13, I had heard of John Langalibalele Dube, one of the founders and first president of the ANC. “Vui!indela Mutaka Dube...” (lead the way son of Dube we have been long in the darkness) we sang lustily about the man! Dube’s colleagues, Pixie ka Serne and Sol Plaatje were other names I became familiar with in my primary boarding school, St Angsa’s Institute, Roodepoort.

New names: Walter Sisulu, and Moses Kotane were also on the lips of our class teacher. BM Masipa, who reviewed history books mentioned King Mosheshoe of Lesotho (Basutoland) who defeated Boer invaders by rolling rocks on them from the top of Thaba Bosiu! King Dingaan who massacred the Boers he hosted, in the boarding school boys’ hero with his war cry, “Bulalani abathalathi! (Kill the wizards).”

We thought it was a heart attack but luckily Govan collapsed and everyone panicked. His family were allowed to order newspapers and we read about those days. We heard that you knocked one of them down.

While you were highly respected as a prisoner whose loved ones were not allowed to visit you, you didn’t let it get you down and kept up your spirits. I was transferred to Pollsmoor Prison in 1971. Before I met Andimba, I was bantalled by meeting some of his countrymen, among them Gerson Vei of Swamu, comrades Shityuwete, Shipomeni, Tjipahirua, Hamutanya (Swapo) and others, in Pretoria Local Prison while in detention under the 180-day detention law.

Though kept in isolated cells, we clandestinely communicated and caught a glimpse of one another in prison corridors. I was burning to know whether they had one Toivo ya Toivo among them. Informed he was in detention, I was disappointed. After the 15-year sentence verdict I was swiftly transferred.

My peripatetic father, who had travelled outside of South Africa there weren’t many names I can remember except that of Herman Toivo ya Toivo, in the late 1950s from a country my father called German West(i), officially known as South West Africa to be later renamed Namibia on attaining independence in 1990. The name Toivo ya Toivo fascinated me. I wished to catch a glimpse of the man even at a distance.

Andimba was a fighter. When the prison authorities got it in their sick head that we self-censor our outgoing letters, they demanded of him to stop referring in his letters to “Namibia.” “Expunge Namibia” or the letter won’t go! “Forget it!” Andimba stubbornly stuck to his guns; “Namibia is Namibia and don’t tell me to call it anything else…” And he flung his arms characteristically.

Mike Dingake

In a good mood, induced by the native brew my mother was expert at, he sang for us some of the native women and the elegance of their dresses.

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ADIMBA! It gives me great pleasure to send you a message for your 90th birthday.

As you know, mine is just a day before and although I am a full five years younger, I think of our birthdays together. This special birthday takes me back to Robben Island where we spent many years together in B Section.

I remember how, when we were in A Group, we used to buy tea, coffee and biscuits. This is how we celebrated our birthdays – with biscuits. Of course you never agreed to participate in the grading of them down. You were a real militant, a tough prisoner whose loved ones were so far away, you sacrificed a great deal in that sense. You didn’t let it get you down and kept up your spirits. I was transferred to Pollsmoor Prison in October 1982, almost 18 months before your release.

Unlike that March when Madiba, Raymond, Walter and Andrew were pounced upon at night to “pack up” and couldn’t say goodbye, I was given some notice.

They told me at 10 am that I needed to be ready to leave at 2pm. So I had the chance to bid farewell to everyone in the section.

I next saw you in Namibia on the first anniversary of independence. You looked me up whenever you are in Joburg and I always enjoy seeing you.

My appetite to know more about German West(i) and its colourful inhabitants, especially the man with a romantic sounding name Toivo ya Toivo, was wetted. Later I was fascinated by reading that he had sent a petition to the United Nations General Assembly to demand the independence of his country! Andimba and I eventually met in Robben Island Prison in 1971. Before I met Andimba, I had been bantalled by meeting some of his countrymen, among them Gerson Vei of Swamu, comrades Shityuwete, Shipomeni, Tjipahirua, Hamutanya (Swapo) and others, in Pretoria Local Prison while in detention under the 180-day detention law. Though kept in isolated cells, we clandestinely communicated and caught a glimpse of one another in prison corridors. I was burning to know whether they had one Toivo ya Toivo among them. Informed he was in detention in Namibia, I was disappointed. After the 15-year sentence verdict I was swiftly transferred.
In my mind I was certain Andimba wouldn’t allow this potential conflict to wreck the victory he had contributed to for the many years! I knew he would concede to Nujoma for the many years Andimba was away. His release was a sign of pressure build-up to bring about the change. Anti-racist, yes! And he flung his arms characteristically. Whether the prison censor kept the letter or sent it, Andimba was unconcerned. How could foreigners tell him what name to give his country? The Swapo dream was to live in a green called Namibia and no earthly power could make Andimba write or say otherwise!

We addressed each other as ‘neighbour’ all the time, except when he instinctively disapproved of my physiognomy which had changed now and then. And then he would call me ‘Kweke-Kwere’ and I retaliated by flinging the epithet back at him. Without prejudice Batswana generally referred to non-Tswana speaking fellow Africans from the north of their country who 

Andimba was a fighter. When the prison authorities got it in their sick head that we were going to be a tug-of-war for presidentia! The prison authorities had to trick him out of his comrades were left in imprisonment. I unceremoniously threw away the ‘lousy study privilege’ of studying! Remonstrations with the Swapo prisoners could be deprived of study privilege for jail conditions of Robben Island, where prisoners were held. We immediately became friends, Andimba and I.

Initially I helped him with the academic subjects he was studying through a corres- pondence course. Our friendship was built on the same creed and tenets maintained under these conditions. Studying under the jail conditions of Robben Island, where pris- oners could be deprived of study privilege for the filthiest excuse soon irritated Andimba, whose attitude was ‘rights’ instead of ‘priv- ileges’ for people whether in jail or outside! He unceremoniously threw away the ‘lousy study privilege’ of studying! Remonstrations with him didn’t work. Once decided, Andimba was unmoved!

My plea to him not to resort to such drastic action, as study ‘privilege’ assailed the prisoner’s tension, fell on deaf ears. I had known since I had failed to convince him, nobody understood Nelson Mandela with whom he was also on the friendliest of terms, could move him. The prison authorities had in the past, tried to trick him out of the prison but former comrades now turn acockpoat apparently to woo him with promise for ‘release’. Andimba had resisted until I pleaded with him to go and murder his former comrades at that Cape Town hotel and find out what tricks the oppressor was up to and how some former comrades were being won over. Reluctantly he had gone to the hotel, turned back, phoned Cape Town hotel and came back amused by the lengths the Boer colonialists could go to attempt to cor- rupt the Namibian freedom struggle!

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Won’t go!” Forget it! Andimba stubbornly stuck to his guns: “Namibia is Namibia and don’t tell me to call it anything else…” And he flung his arms characteristically. Whether the prison censor kept the letter or sent it, Andimba was unconcerned. How could foreigners tell him what name to give his country? The Swapo dream was to live in a green called Namibia and no earthly power could make Andimba write or say otherwise!

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...
A man of charisma and warmth

I had the privilege to get to know Andimba Toivo ya Toivo on a few different occasions. Norway and the other Nordic countries supported the liberation struggle and when Ya Toivo was released from Robben Island in 1983 he soon came to visit Norway and the Namibian Association of Norway where I was involved. Meeting Ya Toivo was a great inspiration to me personally and to the solidarity work and anti-apartheid work that took place in Norway. His charisma, warmth, commitment, humbleness and dedication inspired us all.

A year later we met again, this time in New York. It was election time and we all knew that if Reagan was re-elected, the liberation struggle will be long and bitter. I also have taken up arms. I know that the freedom was fought for and should not be taken for granted.”

To the father of Namibia’s liberation movement

ANDIMBA Toivo Ya Toivo is the father of Namibia’s liberation movement. He established the Ovamboland Peoples’ Congress in Cape Town, which later became the liberation movement of Swapo, that led Namibia to independence.

What is unique about Ya Toivo is that he never vied for leadership. He is a man of the people, more interested in mobilising them to stand up for their freedom. The apartheid regime recognised his abilities and perseverance as a freedom fighter. Therefore they tried to stop him from the onset. First, by confining him to Ondangwa as a way of robbing him of his national character. In order to break Ya Toivo’s isolation, Levi Nganjoe travelled from central Namibia to Ovamboland, originally by bicycle before finding other means, in order to uncover the conditions of the confinement. This testifies how Toivo Ya Toivo’s popularity gradually spread among the Namibian people, regardless of their ethnic origin.

During the Second World War, Ya Toivo, as both a Namibian patriot and a Pan-Africanist, fought against the Germans with the South African forces. In spite of his commitment, he was confined to Robben Island with Nelson Mandela and many others about 20 years later. This was the apartheid regime’s second attempt to silence Ya Toivo, and stop his charisma and agenda spreading to the Namibian people. However, his confinement made him even more recognised as a leader. His greatness can only be compared with the other pioneers of Namibia’s liberation, such as Chief Hosea Kutako, Mbuumba Kerina, and Jarietundu Kozonguizi.

Today we are so thankful and appreciative of the initiative of Ya Toivo, leading us to the monumental gift of freedom. He is not only a loyal Namibian, he is also a dear friend and a role model for Namibia and Africa in general. We celebrate and congratulate him on his 90th birthday on 22 August 2014.

“I am a loyal Namibian and could not betray my people to their enemies. I admit that I decided to assist those who have taken up arms. I know that the struggle will be long and bitter. I also know that my people will wage that struggle, whatever the cost.”

-Uncarvana Ewald Kajivena (in Norway)

Toivo ya Toivo 90th birthday wishes from Paths to Freedom launch

Yochanaan Coetzee:

Mbuumba Kerina: “Toivo ya Toivo is one of our greatest leaders. During the struggle, we communicated regularly since 1966 and it was only after independence that we met face to face. His name can be mentioned alongside those of great men such as Nelson Mandela.”

Vickson Angula: “I am looking forward to celebrating the strong man’s birthday. Through his bravery and perseverance he has become a living example of making it through until you reach the top . . .”

Onesmus Maharero: “A long life to him, we need to stay mindful of our struggle veterans and how much they sacrificed for the country’s freedom.”

Ben Ulenga: “One will never truly know the feeling of true fulfillment, but I wish him all the happiness and fulfillment in the world. He is blessed to see the free and independent Namibia and so many others fought for and we are blessed to have him around.”

Alfred Angula: “Their sacrifices are beyond what we can imagine, therefore I thank leaders like Tate Ya Toivo and wish him a very happy birthday.”

Cecil Moller: “He is truly a great man and the nation wishes him well. Hopefully local production companies can one day secure the rights to tell his remarkable story.”

Gerson Veii: “I wish him a very happy 90th birthday. May leaders like him live long and continue to be an example to all Namibians and be a reminder that freedom was fought for and should not be taken for granted.”

Toivo ya Toivo birthday: Paths to Freedom launches gifts to Ya Toivo

Toivo ya Toivo’s 90th birthday: Paths to Freedom launches gifts to Ya Toivo. Namibian president Hage Geingob led the launch ceremony, joined by leaders of the various political parties.”

HERMAN ANDIMBA TOIVO YA TOIVO AT 90
FRIDAY 22 AUGUST 2014

Herman Andimba Toivo ya Toivo aT 90 Herman Andimba Toivo ya Toivo aT 90
Andimba the inspirational leader

**HELAO JOSEPH SHITYUWETE**

We met for the first time in the 1950s, where he taught me English under a tree at Odibo, when he himself was also a student. He was an excellent teacher, even then, and I was hungry to learn.

Even though we went our separate ways (me to Walvis Bay and other contracts, he to Cape Town) we never lost sight of each other. When I was in Walvis Bay I read the story of his expulsion from Cape Town in 1958 in the newspaper and followed subsequent events. When I left Walvis Bay in 1961, I went to visit him at Okaloko, where he was under house arrest. This is when we planned to leave Namibia for New York via Angola, but this failed to work out on two occasions.

In 1962, Andimba and I linked up again when the first United Nations delegation came to Namibia, headed by Victorio Carpio. Andimba, I and others demonstrated to insist that he meets our delegation and in the end he agreed.

Contract labour again took me to Windhoek and in 1964 I decided to go abroad in search of education, but I was deemed “over-age” at the age of 30 and took up military training instead. On my return to Namibia in 1966, I was arrested and detained in Pretoria. Once again fate was to bring us together.

In 1968, Andimba was arrested for contraband and I joined him in Pretoria. We spent there.

**BOB HUGHES**

Andimba Toivo ya Toivo is an inspirational leader of Swapo of Namibia who I remember with admiration and affection and like to call a personal friend. He attended and spoke at the Anti-Apartheid Movement National Convention in 1984 and the quarter of a million strong Nelson Mandela Freedom Rally in Hyde Park, London in 1988, the latter bringing real poignancy and realism as he had shared time on Robben Island with Madiba.

Those of us who were active in the Anti-Apartheid Movement were able to share and play a part in the struggle for freedom in southern Africa with the giants of Africa such as Toivo ya Toivo.

Much remains to be done to tackle the legacies of the apartheid years, and the successor to AAM, Action for Southern Africa, continues to be inspired by the example of Ya Toivo in striving to deal with the massive challenges which remain.

We wish him a very happy birthday and good wishes for the future for him, his wife Vicki and family.

*Bob Hughes was the chair of the Anti-Apartheid Movement and president Action for Southern Africa (ACTSA). At Lord Hughes of Woodside he is a member of House of Lords.*

Andimba Herman Toivo ya Toivo

‘My teacher, my mentor, my friend’

**Photo: Anti-Apartheid Movement Archives**

**INSPIRATIONAL...** Andimba Toivo ya Toivo with ES Reddy and then Labour leader Neil Kinnock at the Anti-Apartheid Movement’s 25th anniversary convention in June 1984.

In the importance of unifying the country to achieve independence remains now as we seek to promote development and greater equality in Namibia. These are ideals I share.

Although I am approaching my 80th birthday, I am still his younger brother. I look up to him as my mentor and hero and I am honoured to be at his side to ‘carry his stick’ for the rest of the years we may have left together.

**Photo: Family Album**

**BACK TO WHERE IT STARTED...** Anti-Apartheid struggle warriors Andimba Toivo ya Toivo, Mike Dingake and Helao Shityuwete revisited Robben Island to recall the days they spent there.

*Bob Hughes was the chair of the Anti-Apartheid Movement and president Action for Southern Africa (ACTSA). At Lord Hughes of Woodside he is a member of House of Lords.*

**Photo: Family Album**

*NDIMBA Toivo ya Toivo is an inspirational leader of Swapo of Namibia who I remember with admiration and affection and like to call a personal friend. He attended and spoke at the Anti-Apartheid Movement National Convention in 1984 and the quarter of a million strong Nelson Mandela Freedom Rally in Hyde Park, London in 1988, the latter bringing real poignancy and realism as he had shared time on Robben Island with Madiba.*

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**Photo: Anti-Apartheid Movement Archives**

**INSPIRATIONAL...** Andimba Toivo ya Toivo with ES Reddy and then Labour leader Neil Kinnock at the Anti-Apartheid Movement’s 25th anniversary convention in June 1984.
A humanitarian par excellence

HERMAN Andimba Toivo ya Toivo is not only a respected personality as a political icon, but to the Red Cross family locally and internationally, he is a humanitarian par excellence who has displayed his care and love for humanity through his voluntary service to the most vulnerable Namibians.

“Tatekulu” as he is affectionately known by staff, volunteers and beneficiaries of the Namibia Red Cross Society, has over the decades been a familiar face at the NRCS offices and all official functions and meetings, giving his time and commitment selflessly. He carries an aura which commands respect and honour. He joined the Namibia Red Cross Society, has over the decades been a familiar face at the NRCS offices and all official functions and meetings, giving his time and commitment selflessly. He carries an aura which commands respect and honour.

As you celebrate your 90th birthday today, may the whole Universe smile at you. May the Christ of the Universe be kind to you and give you peace. May you accept our humble appreciation for the long-term friendship we have enjoyed with you. May the years ahead be light, once filled with hope and happiness.

We at Kapia Optics just want you to know that we love you with all our hearts. We thank God for your illustrious life and we are highly appreciative of the price you have paid for Namibia and her people.

May this day be one of the best days of your life and may you live to be 150.

From all of us at Kapia Optics
Ya Toivo’s 1968 Court Statement:

My Lord, you found it necessary to brand me as a coward. During the Second World War, when it became evident that both my country and your country were threatened by the dark clouds of Nazism, I risked my life to defend both of them, wearing a uniform with orange bands on it.

- Ya Toivo

The CREDO of OUR STRUGGLE

PHANUEL KAAPAMA and ELLEN NDESHI NAMHILA

I

This tribute is specifically penned as a humble contribution to the 90th birthday celebration of a legendary leader and an icon of Namibian independence struggle, Tafekalu Andimba Toivo ya Toivo. It professes excerpts of his legendary, courageous and steering statement, delivered on 1 February 1968 in the Pretoria Supreme Court where he and 36 others were being tried on charges of terrorism. As he put it then in his statement, he justified his speaking on behalf of his co-accused as follows: “I speak of ‘we’ because I am trying to speak not only for myself, but for others as well, and especially for those of my fellow accused who have not had the benefit of any education. I think also that when I say ‘we’, the overwhelming majority of non–white people in South Africa would like to be included”.

He commenced his statement by emphatically stating for the record that he and his 36 co-accused found themselves ushered against their will to “... a foreign country, convicted under laws made by people whom we have always considered as foreigners. We find ourselves tried by a judge who is not our countryman and who has not shared our background... You, my Lord, decided that you had the right to try us, because your parliament gave you that right. That ruling has not and could not have changed our feelings. We are Namibians and not South Africans. We do not now, and will not in the future, recognise your right to govern us; to make laws for us in which we had no say; to treat our country as if it were your property and as if you were our master”. This courtroom oratory became one of the most eloquent explanations ever given of why Namibians want independence from South Africa.

In his memoirs, George Bizos, a member of the legal defence team, noted that Judge Josef Ludorf in no uncertain terms that “My Lord, you found it necessary to brand me as a coward. During the Second World War, when it became evident that both my country and your country were threatened by the dark clouds of Nazism, I risked my life to defend both of them, wearing a uniform with orange bands on it. But some of your countrymen when called to battle to defend civilization resorted to sabotage against their own fatherland. I volunteered to face German bullets, and as a guard in a room oratory became one of the most eloquent of the Robben Island stalwarts during one of his visits to the Island.

Happy birthday TAFEKALU ANDIMBA, mayego tuku taasinine".
Andimba Toivo ya Toivo has kept good shape throughout the years with rigorous training which involves swimming, gym and exercises at home. The photos were taken when he was 80 years old.

FITNESS FANATIC: Andimba Toivo ya Toivo has kept good shape throughout the years with rigorous training which involves swimming, gym and exercises at home. The photos were taken when he was 80 years old.

Ya Toivo meets Capitol Hill

The release from prison of Andimba Toivo ya Toivo in March 1984 was met with much celebration by the US anti-apartheid movement. Those of us working in the movement who were lobbying in support of Namibia through the legislative channels in Washington, DC, were particularly enthusiastic. At the time, I was the young executive assistant at the Washington Office on Africa (WOA) working closely with my boss and mentor, Dr. Jean Sindab (1944-1996) who was the organization’s executive director.

WOA had a movement-wide reputation of meeting with much celebration by the US congressional representatives as, in essence, the Reagan Administration’s “Linkage Policy.”

Into this US political cauldron in 1985, Andimba Toivo ya Toivo entered the fray. While never shouting, ranting or showing any anger during his visits, Ya Toivo came out fighting and was on the attack on all points. He talked about his life on Robben Island and most importantly, why he was sent to Swaps to the USA. He gave updates on the struggle inside and outside Namibia and in particular, the war situation in Angola. He held court with the already converted and reaffirmed their belief that what they were doing made a difference.

But surprisingly for some of us who accompanied him on his programmes, he held the right attention of the unconverted too! Many “wavering” journalists and legislators, who repeated the “linkage” excuse for blocking the implementation of UN Resolution 435 on Namibia, until Cuban troops left Angola. This was, in essence, the Reagan Administration’s “Linkage Policy.”

While Ya Toivo’s lobbying visits, my boss delivered briefing sessions for him. She reviewed the potential attitudes and level of receptiveness of the legislators or journalists he would be meeting. I was amazed at how quickly he inculcated the information into his knowledge base and used it during his presentations, informal banter and answers to questions. Constantly, he brought every conversation around to Namibia, the need to implement Resolution 435, the rejection of the linkage policy, the need for funding for the UN Institute for Namibia, and an end for US military support for UNITA. Often he had to do mini-geography lessons.

While I was unable to unearth any old copies of his itineraries from so long ago, old colleagues helped me recall his visits while in Washington. He visited with Members of the Congressional Black Caucus and the House Africa Subcommittee (chaired by Howard Wolpe from Michigan). He had historic meetings with the great Congressmen Ronald V. Dellums and John Conyers, Senators Ted Kennedy, John Kerry (now Secretary of State of the USA), Paul Simon (chairman of the Senate Africa sub-committee), Lowell Weicker (a rare species: A liberal Republican), Christopher Dodd, and Richard Lugar (Chair of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, responsible for legislation affecting Namibia) and others. He presented the Swapo action agenda, answered all queries, gave history lessons about southern Africa and even told stories that often left the room laughing. He commanded rooms filled with powerful men.

An archivist of the anti-apartheid movement and a former colleague from the Americans Committee on Africa, Richard Knight, sent me several links to relevant documents that have been scanned and saved. He sent me an old programme from a “National Conference on Namibia and the US” held at the Lutheran School of Theology in Chicago – 23–25 July, 1987, from a second Ya Toivo visit to the USA.

Ya Toivo was not only the keynote speaker, but he also did press interviews. During the opening lunch, he sat next to the book-lookers looking, bespectacled senator Paul Simon to directly lobby him on Namibian issues. As we celebrate the 90th birthday of an icon of Namibia, we must also remember his long reach of effectiveness. His scope did not only include past achievements that are well documented, but some that are nearly forgotten, like those visits to the USA. It should always be remembered that he was among the Swapo leaders that touched armies of people in different places around the world and helped them make a significant positive impact on the independence struggle.
IN ARMS ... Ya Toivo with Oliver Tambo.

TRIO ... Ya Toivo with Ben Ulenga and the late African National Congress stalwart Walter Sisulu.

MEDIA BRIEFING ... During a media briefing with Hendrik Witbooi (left) and former Swapo president Sam Nujoma in March 1984 at Lusaka, Zambia.

STRAIGHT UP ... As a railway guard in 1952 at Cape Town.

IN HIS SHOP ... Ya Toivo had a shop (Cash Store) in 1963 and is seen behind the counter.

FIELD WORK ... Ya Toivo with the late former Swapo Secretary General Moses //Garoeb (right) in 1986.

NOTED ... Ex-changing notes as Minister of Labour with former International Labour Organisation Director General Juan Somavia.

TOUGHTFUL ... Niko Bessinger and Toivo.

QUICK CHAT ... Ya Toivo and Thabo Mbeki.

LOOK ALIKES ... With his brother Nestor (left) in 1955.

Photo: Family Collection
We love you Andimba,  
Happy 90th Birthday!  

Words cannot describe how blessed this generation is to have lived during the times of the icon like you. Namibia is blessed to have you.

Thanks for being a wonderful friend to our family. You have been an inspiration to all of us in striving to be better.

The SAVVA Family.