



Obituary

Sindile Christopher Mfazi (1962-2021)

**In honour of a true patriot,
The Cadre of the Oldest African Movement**

SC *Mfazi*

Sindile Christopher Mfazi was notably among the few greatest leaders the South African Police Service has ever had who rose to the second highest level of General occupying a seat alongside the National Commissioner as Deputy National Commissioner. His contribution to the formation of democratic South Africa remains to be one that is deserving of published literature. Through his principled stance on various issues it can be argued that indeed he lifted the profile of what we know as a disciplined cadre, a member of the African National Congress and a passionate man about the national democratic revolution. But to understand the man we must understand how it all began.

The life of Sindile, the son of the late Tat'u Mthetheleli Hubert and Lawukazi Deborah Mfazi, began on the 05th of May in 1962 kwa Tsolo, in East London being the sixth of the seven children, Nontembiso, Lulama, Ntsikelelo, Mbulelo, Sindiswa, and Nompumelelo. Nanyi as he was affectionately called, attended his foundation phase of his schooling at Dumisa Lower Primary, Gcobani Higher Primary and Wongalethu Senior Secondary. He experienced urban African life under apartheid in the township of Mdantsane and when his age mates were busy and excited with boxing, comrade Pitso was attracted to politics.

His entire childhood life was characterised by widespread poverty, overcrowding and constant police harassment in the area and so naturally his love for politics grew.

Nanyi's first political orientation was in 1979 during the formation of COSAS. Thanks to the ANC veterans, the tried and tested cadres of the Movement around Mdantsane, Old man like Papa Joe, tat'u Mtyanti Msaule and oobaw'u Solwandle most of them were banished in Mdantsane and unknowingly to the system, they were breeding a vibrant underground terrain for the ANC rebirth and renewal.

The continued interactions with these ANC veterans really assisted in shaping and positioning comrade Pitso in acquiring an old age tradition of the ANC, discipline.

Around January in 1982, during one of his many political rounds in Port Elizabeth, which was his regular exercise, Pitso was only 19 years old, had his first encounter with the notorious gang of the Sanlam Security Branch Police, abo Thungatha, Duplesis, Smuts, Harting, Niewoudt and Roelofse.

He was one of the comrades rounded by the Security Branch at sisi Pinky and Tat'u Nkanunu's house in Masangwana, New Brighton together with several of his Port Elizabeth comrades. This arrest coincided with a very successful workers' strike at Wilson Rowntree in East London. During the processing of these comrades at the Sanlam notorious SB offices, the system detected that two comrades were from Uitenhage and East London something that really infuriated the Security Police.

They were not impressed that the two comrades were not from Port Elizabeth as a result they got the lion's share of the beating that night and accused of trying to mobilize the workers in Port Elizabeth to embark on solidarity strike.

The beating started around 18h00 and went on until the early hours of the morning. In the wee hours of the morning as they were releasing these comrades, the time was around 01h00 am, and it was still dark, they noticed the police assigned to drive them home was driving towards Grahamstown instead of Kwazakhele.

At the hiking spot near Grahamstown off-ramp after passing Carbon Black factory, the police told Pitso to disembark from the car and start to hike back to Mdantsane and never come back to Port Elizabeth again. The rest of the comrades got out of the police van as they were not prepared to abandon Pitso at the hiking spot that time, at this point, the police ordered all of them to get back on the van including comrade Pitso.

All the comrades were dropped at Kwazakhele near Moscow, again Pitso and Mnyamezeli Booie were told never to come back in Port Elizabeth, Pitso because he was a stubborn fighter, continued his stay in Port Elizabeth and interacted with the COSAS comrades and its President comrade Wantu Zenzile who was in Port Elizabeth at the time.

During this period, Pitso was a COSAS leader and a link between Port Elizabeth and the former Ciskei. Because of the addictive nature of the struggle, comrade Pitso graduated from the student politics and started getting involved in the underground activities of the ANC, a fact we got to know much later. That again attracted the attention of the Security Branch even though he was never detected.

The Security Police raided comrade Pitso's home frequently as if they knew that he had graduated from the student politics to even bigger things. Because he was well trained even at that early age, Pitso was very disciplined, and outwitted the system.

Because of his continued harassment by the Security Branch, Pitso discontinued his schooling after passing standard 9 in 1981. The schools became the hunting ground of the Security Branch, as they could not find Pitso at home.

By this time, Pitso had mastered the art of Military Combat Work long before he did this formal training, thanks to comrades like Charles Nqakula and Papa Joe who oriented him in these military combat tactics and techniques.

The senior comrades detected that the circle was closing; they instructed Pitso to pursue the politics by other means, comrade Pitso left for exile to join MK in 1984.

Comrade Pitso completed his basic military training in Caculama, Angola in 1985. After the training, he was deployed in Pango, to train and prepare MK cadres assigned to infiltrate South Africa. This was the time of intense skirmishes in Angola; Savimbi bandits assisted by the racist South African Army against the formidable MK, MPLA and the Cuban forces. Many books talk of how the enemy forces were annihilated during these military engagements and maneuvers.

Once again, those who shared the trenches with comrade Pitso during these skirmishes will testify about his bravery and his commanding abilities, he constantly led from the front. He demonstrated good qualities of a very good tactician. Every mission entrusted to comrade Pitso by the ANC and MK, rest assured it was be executed diligently and with distinction.

In 1987, comrade Pitso was sent to Cuba for the specialization course in weaponry and Tactics. After this programme, Pitso was off to Tanzania for Commandos Military Training in 1988, after this programme, he joined the Department of Intelligence and Security becoming the head of the Department in the ANC camp in Tanzania.

In all the tasks he was assigned in exile, comrade Pitso continued to excel, once again this attracted the attention of the South African Communist Party, at some point comrade Pitso was deployed

and responsible for the safety of Bab'u Moses Mobhida, the leader of the African National Congress and the South African Communist Party. During this period, Pitso worked very closely with comrade Chris Hani, a Communist Party member himself.

This is the portrait of an MK cadre, a patriot who authored his life in service to nationhood, spurred by integrity in the quest to contribute towards the making of the greater South Africa.

A direct response from a call by one of greatest educators and a legal guru, Harace Mann who is known by many profound quotations such as “Be ashamed to die until you have won some victory for humanity”

Until he was recalled to the other world beyond the skies and our horizon, comrade Pitso subscribed to this mantra, so many families across South Africa have bread winners today, thanks you to General Mfazi.

He has won so many victories, this death has robbed the multitudes of the South Africans, like dominos, their dreams will drop and a become dim. So many of us will be so incomplete and inadequate without him, the void by his untimely demise will be difficult to be filled.

When Pitso came back from exile, he was deployed as a Protector of the then Secretary General of the South African Party, Cde Charles Nqakula. It was during this period when his elder sister who was a teacher at the time encouraged him to complete his Matric, which he did and completed in 1993.

Comrade Pitso never looked back in the direction of acquiring academically; he completed an advance Project Management diploma and a Project Management qualification. His studies were disrupted by his untimely death.

In 1994, he was deployed in the Eastern Cape and joined the Management of the VIP Unit in 1996. During this period, he worked very closely with Oom Ray, the Eastern Cape Premier at the time and this deployment continued until he amalgamated into South African Police Service-Criminal Intelligence in 1998.

Not long after the amalgamation of the various police agencies within the Eastern Cape Province, then, Lieutenant Colonel Mfazi was promoted to the rank of Brigadier, and appointed as the Provincial Head of the Eastern Cape Crime Intelligence Division. The appointment was met with huge resistance from contenders within the ranks of former SAPS, homeland and MK cadres, who attempted to derail the appointment.

As a young Senior Officer Brigadier Mfazi displayed unshakable conviction, integrity and honor when dealing with the onslaught and rose beyond the call of duty. To the dismay of many General Mfazi promoted a number of the aggrieved parties into strategic positions, where they became an intricate part of his management and served him well.

Irony is not without its lessons. As a member of the Crime Intelligence division within the South African Police Service comrade Pitso found himself having to work with his torturers of the then security branch who had shown cruelty to him in Port Elizabeth. At many stages of his career he found himself commander over these men who were instruments of the apartheid government. But knowing who Pitso was, not for a single day did he ever remind them of the atrocities inflicted by them unto him. He instead rewarded them whenever they excelled at their work teaching them the age old lessons of non racialism and equality for all.

Rising through the ranks of the SAPS Pitso challenged all those deployed alongside him, by the ANC, to strive to master the SAPS as an organization so that one day they could lead it and ensure that a policing force in democratic South Africa understands the national democratic revolution and the importance of equality before the law for all.

The late Jackie Selebi was the National Commissioner of the SAPS and it was their intervention together with General Petros, the then Western Cape Provincial Commissioner who sought the assistance of Pitso in that province to assist in dealing with what had become a gang problem. As early as 2003 Pitso's ability to serve at higher echelons of the SAPS was recognized and given effect. The former Minister of Police, Minister Mbalula amply postulates this fact in his touching tribute entitled "The Last Radio Call".

His greatest aspiration was to ensure that the SAPS developed into an effective entity which could positively impact in the fight against crime. He was a dedicated officer, colleague and a friend to most who worked with him. Described as a strong person through and through his character and personality left many people with deep respect for him.

The rank and file of the South African Police Service were all very lucky to have had General Mfazi in their lives as a commander, mentor, colleague, and friend.

Comrade Mbalula says in his tribute that "Pitso became an exemplary figure in the rank and file of the police" from the physical front lines of combating crime and keeping South Africans safe he was indeed a reliable officer.

Unknown to many, the Crime Intelligence division during 2010 wanted to get Pitso out of the division because he spoke out against blatant wrongdoings and what he called 'an abuse of state power'. He was essentially suspended for almost an entire year. He was never afraid to speak truth to power even if it caused him and his family great discomfort. He traversed this difficult path with total respect and discipline for police regulations until he was rightfully re-instated in his rightful position as Head of Crime Intelligence in the Eastern Cape. It was these acts of bravery and continued pursuit for principled leadership which caught the attention of many leaders of South Africa including Minister Fikile Mbalula.

Though little can be shared on the public platform about this work within Crime Intelligence, it can however be stated that his contribution to that division essentially transformed what was historically utilized by the oppressive apartheid government into a service orientated division which has its policies grounded on constitutionalism and justice.

In 2018 he was tasked with the responsibility of strengthening the South African Police Service from a national level. Appointed as Deputy National Commissioner and serving alongside National Commissioner General Khehla Sithole, Pitso rubberstamped his abilities as a leader and a committed South African.

He used his acquired skills as a military leader and a tested Crime Intelligence commander to head up the Crime Detection Division. General Sitole described his deputy as an "exemplary leader who was dedicated to the cause of serving and protecting the people of South Africa".

Comrade Sindile always knew it was nice to be important, but he believed it was more important to be nice. He always surrounded himself with ordinary men and women, something that puzzled so many, with all his power and authority that never got into his head. This is an attribute he maintained, he remained humble until his last breathe. A mere mortal that left behind immortal memories.

To fall inlove is always a blessing. We are glad that in 2003 he met his gracious wife Malindi and in 2010 they took their vows in front of loved ones. Their marriage was blessed with two beautiful boys, Gugulethu and Lutho.

It is to tell the truth when we say, comrade Pitso leaves behind a record in our struggle and renewal programme which will be surpassed by few. He was certainly a seasoned cadre of outstanding qualities. To say his death has struck our government and the ANC a blow is no exaggeration.

We will certainly miss his jokes, laughter and his seriousness at the same time. Comrade Sindile Mfazi literally fell on his post, few hours from one of his Western Cape missions, his spear just dropped down in the middle of the battle to rid our beautiful country of corruption, general crime and lawlessness, things that he detested most.

If we really acknowledge and noticed his footprints, picking up his fallen spear will be the logical thing to do. That will be the best send off that he will embrace even beyond the skies. Because he was a communist, comrade Pitso knew that life continues even after ones death, to the Generals, NASCOM, Deputy Minister and our Minister, comrade Pitso expects nothing less, lets join the President in his quest of building a crime free South Africa with a better life for all.

Sindile loved his family; we know this is a cliché, to him it was not but his second nature, breathing being his first. His children's immediate reaction after being notified of their dads demise tells it all.

Comrade Sindile Christopher Mfazi is survived by his wife Nomisumzi, affectionately known as Malindi by his late husband, two children Gugulethu and Lutho, two sisters Nontembiso and Lulama, his brother Ntsikelelo and many nephews and nieces.

SC *Mfazi*

Hamba kahle livulekile Izulu Nozulu,
Mbanguba
Sibambha ngazo zozibini Mpafane

Rest in peace Pitso
Go well Guerrilla lomKhonto

And so the SAPS and the MK soldiers shall
make their last radio call.....

"May-Day" "May-Day", officer is down.

A General is down!

Beloved son, husband, father, uncle, comrade, friend, colleague,
manager, leader, sibali,

AMANDLAAAAA!!!!!!



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