

NAKEDI MATHEWS PHOSA

ANC National Executive Committee

Born on 1 September 1952 in Nelspruit, Nakedi Mathews Phosa was the second of the four children of Reshoketjoe and Paul Phosa, a schoolteacher. His mother was a nurse who served in Europe as a volunteer during the Second World War.

Phosa's homelife was imbued with politics with his mother keeping the history of black resistance alive with stories about Nelson Mandela. His mother's resolve to serve as a volunteer for the Allied forces to fight fascism in Europe motivated him to later join the struggle against the apartheid government.

Phosa spent his primary school years with his grandparents in Potgietersrus. He became a boarder in 1967 when he attended the Maripi High School at Acornhoek in the Eastern Transvaal where he matriculated in 1971. Phosa was a keen student and participated in debating and drama. He also enjoyed boxing, karate and athletics.

Phosa had his first brush with the security police while still at school. Pupils who had agitated against and disrupted a whites-only event to be held at the school were isolated and interrogated by the security police and finally suffered severe beatings at the hand of the headmaster. The events left the students feeling embittered and more radical.

According to Phosa it was the ethnically divisive bantustan system and in particular the attempts by those apartheid administrations to assume tribal authority over the schools which added to his politicisation. These attempts stirred tribal conflicts between pupils and those who were politicised turned against the National Party government.

It was the boom years of the black consciousness movement at black schools, universities and colleges and at the University of the North (Turfloop) Phosa joined the South African Students' Organisation (Saso), becoming publicity secretary for the Turfloop branch.

As a student Phosa had to work part-time during holidays to financially assist his mother. His father had died in 1970 and throughout his years at Turfloop Phosa worked as a printing clerk at a construction company during his vacations. In 1972 Phosa enrolled for a BProc LLB and after graduating in 1977 he served his articles with

a Johannesburg legal firm. He returned to the Eastern Transvaal in 1980 and opened his own legal practice, Phosa, Mojapelo and Partner. He was actively involved in legal work until he went into exile in 1985. He is still a senior partner in the firm.

Phosa had joined the ANC and Umkhonto we Sizwe in 1979. He initially operated as a political organiser in underground structures conducting a number of campaigns. During this time he made several contacts with ANC structures in neighbouring countries and in Europe.

From 1981 to 1983, while based in Nelspruit, Phosa led the campaign against the incorporation of KaNgwane into Swaziland together with the former and present KaNgwane chief ministers, Enos Mabuza and Caiphus Zitha, who he claims were all members of the same ANC underground cell. His activities prompted the security police to raid his house at night for arms.

In 1984 Phosa led the anti-tricameral parliament campaign throughout the Eastern Transvaal. In 1985 he led the rent boycotts which started in Piet Retief and spread throughout the region.

In April 1985 Phosa left the country after ANC intelligence sources uncovered a plot to assassinate him. In exile he spent most of his time in Maputo, Mozambique. He was appointed regional commander of the political military committee of the region. Based in Maputo he directed the ANC's political and military work in the Eastern Transvaal region. During his period in exile he received political and military training in the German Democratic Republic.

In 1990 Phosa was among the first ANC members to return from exile to begin pre-negotiation talks with the government. He was closely involved in the setting up of joint meetings and the writing of the Groote Schuur and Pretoria Minutes. He was also involved in the planning of the National Peace Accord signed in September 1991.

Based at ANC headquarters in Johannesburg, Phosa heads the legal section of the ANC's Department of Constitutional and Legal Affairs. He is a member of the ANC National Negotiations Commission which strategises all negotiations activities of the organisation. At Codesa he served

in Working Group Four which dealt with the future of the homelands. Phosa has also been involved in behind-the-scenes negotiations on a number of security issues, including the release of political prisoners.

He was a key negotiator in the process leading up to the signing of the Record of Understanding on 26 September 1992 between the ANC and the National Party and is a member of the police board established in terms of the National Peace Accord to monitor the actions of the police force.

Phosa is chairperson of the ANC Eastern Transvaal Region and in that capacity is responsible for the overall organisational and political work of the movement in the region. As chairman he also serves as an ex officio member of the

ANC National Executive Committee.

Phosa has also served as a member of the National Executive of the Black Lawyers' Association (1982-85) and was a member of the Board of Directors of Mapulaneng Enterprises from 1983 to 1985. In addition, he was a founder member of the Lusito Lwesive Welfare Association in 1983.

Phosa has published Afrikaans and English poetry in the literary magazines *Standpunte*, *New Classic* and *Staffrider* under the name of *Nakedi Phosa*. He is presently compiling an anthology of poems.

Phosa, who speaks Northern Sotho, Swazi, Southern Sotho, Tswana, English, Zulu, Afrikaans and Portuguese, is married to Yvonne Nkwenkwezi, a social worker, and they have two children.