



The 70s Group holds that life is sacrosanct, ought to be lived in dignity, and accorded decency to explore potential to the fullest. The defence of life demands all of humanity gracing our planet to ensure accountability and justice.

The 70s Group salutes liberation stalwart Thomas 'Thom' Madikwe Manthata

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Thom Manthata ranks amongst the shining examples in the galaxy of liberation stars who have served the majority of our struggling people in the various capacities in which he was called upon to serve.

He was a man of many hats. He wore each with the diligence of a true servant, fit for the task and trusted to carry out each mission assigned to him to the letter. And, he was a man of deep faith.

Amongst the many hats that graced his fighting head, he was:

- A renowned teacher at Sekano Ntoane High School, a centre of the June 16 student uprisings, where many Black Consciousness adherents, such as President Cyril Ramaphosa and the National Council of Provinces Chair Amos Masondo, benefitted from his tutelage.
- Vice President of South African Students' Organisation (SASO) in the lead up to the Viva Frelimo Rallies to mark the collapse of colonial rule in Mozambique in September 1974.
- Member of the Committee of Ten with Dr Nthato Motlana post the collapse of the Urban Bantu Council in the wake of June 16 1976.
- On the Ad Hoc Committee to form the Black People's Convention (BPC) from December 1971.
- Part of the Soweto delegation to meet with the SASO/BPC trialists in February 1977 in Pretoria Prison (which included Tizzah Mazibuko, Aubrey Mokoena, Drake Koka, Seth Mazibuko) when Hlako Kenny Rachidi briefed the trialists of something big brewing in Soweto with the opposition to Afrikaans. Of most concern to the delegation was that this would lead to conviction of the accused, as what was alleged in the indictment would come to pass. The SASO/BPC trialists response was that they had been in leadership, "but now you are, the struggle continues..." Manthata was one amongst those on whom the burden of leadership fell. And he did not fail as is being attested by those who were conscientised by him, who worked with him, and who knew him.
- With the murder of Steve Biko in Police custody on 12 September 1977, BPC Executive Member Manthata and BPC President Rachidi organised what was to be the start of mass funerals, held despite apartheid police attempts to restrict mass participation.
- After the banning of 18 Black Consciousness organisations and certain black newspapers on 19 October 1977, and while in Modder B Prison, he encouraged the continuation of open political organisation, which led to the formation of the Azanian People's Organisation.
- Excluded from teaching, he worked at the South African Council of Churches where he assisted hundreds of families whose loved ones were in prison or exile.
- As Second-in-Command to Desmond Tutu he was actively involved in the formation of the National Forum, which sought to unify black resistance to the racist system.
- He was an accused in the Delmas Trial and was imprisoned on Robben Island.

With the advent of democracy in 1994, Manthata remained ready, willing, and able to serve, including as commissioner in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the SA Human Rights Commission, where he acquitted himself passionately fostering the rights of the elderly.

He stands revealed as part of a small and fast-disappearing committed genre of servant leaders. He took each role the struggle presented him with focused self-deprecating

determination. And, amongst the many hats he wore performing national patriotic duties, not once did he raise one single role to the total eclipse of the other roles he equally served, neither did he put himself first or above the people of SA. He gave to the nation, he never took.

We are saddened to see him lost to the country and the nation, especially in these most trying times, when the exemplary leadership he displayed is mostly needed.

May his good deeds live to be a shining torch to light up the road ahead as we struggle to build a nation without regard to sectarian, racial or other narrow interests.

We commend his wife Barbara and his children for selflessly sharing their singular husband and parent with SA in the quest to rise above our terrible history, cherish our diversity and realise our common humanity.

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The 70s Group comprises activists from the SASO era who created the consciousness that inspired open resistance, laying the basis for democracy. Anti-sectarian, anti-racist, and anti-sexist, The 70s Group is dedicated to the quest to reclaim Our Common Humanity.