

## VUYISA QUNTA: A HARD BOILED PATRIOT

By

Mosibudi Mangena

I woke up on Wednesday morning, 27/08/2014, to the devastating news of the passing of Vuyisa Qunta the previous night at One Military Hospital in Tshwane. I knew he was ill but he and I had been discussing his trip back to his hometown of Cape Town after his release from hospital. We were looking forward to recuperation and a journey, not death.

Born in January 1949, he was not exactly a spring chicken anymore, but he was very health conscious and lived accordingly. Those of us who were close to him often got lectures from him, solicited or not, about how to look after our health.

Vuyisa joined the South African Students Organization, SASO, in the early seventies while a student at the University of Fort Hare. His political activities on campus and in Cape Town put him on a collision course with the oppressive state, forcing him into exile.

I first met him in Gaborone in the mid eighties on his return from Australia where he had gone to study. We stayed in the same house and our children, who were more or less of the same age, played together. He was a doting father who loved his daughters to bits and would do almost anything for them.

Once in Botswana, he threw himself, body and soul, into the political and military activities of the Black Consciousness Movement of Azania, BCMA. Generally widely read and blessed with a formidable intellect, he was an asset in political discussions and the teaching of the younger members of our organization. He was a straight talker whose sharp tongue took no prisoners.

After undergoing military training, he became an important cog in the activities of the Azanian National Liberation Army, AZANLA, in Botswana. He was involved mainly in managing recruits, transporting them and fully trained soldiers, and delivering supplies to fighters in the mountains in the south of Botswana. Botswana detained him several times for his activities, and when their patience ran out, they expelled him from their country.

We arranged that he and his family move to Zimbabwe, where we once more lived in the same house in Harare. I chaired the Central Committee of the BCMA in which he served as Publicity Secretary.

In this position, it was his responsibility to produce and circulate Letsetse, a monthly mobilization publication, inside the country. A good writer with an excellent command of language, some of us were often dismayed by his “brutal” editing of articles we submitted to him for inclusion in Letsetse.

After our return from exile, he again served one term in the AZAPO Central Committee when I was president of the organization. He was an office bearer in the AZANLA Military Veterans Association, AZANLAMVA, and the South African Military Veterans Association, SAMVA.

Vuyisa had an overwhelming passion for rugby. He researched and produced two books on rugby in our country. He would regale some of us with countless rugby stories.

Qunta was an accomplished and dedicated patriot, not only for our country, but the entire continent. He once told me that Africans would never be completely free for as long as they prayed other people’s gods. Food for thought, isn’t it?

He will be buried in Kwa-Langa, Cape Town on Saturday, 6<sup>th</sup> September, 2014.

Mosibudi Mangena

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