

Songezo “Madiba” Mjongile

Obituary



1973 - 2020

Obituary

Songezo Mjongile was born on 26 November 1973 in Port Elizabeth. He is the eldest son of Mr Siliti Joseph and Mrs Thembeke Mjongile. He grew up in Gugulethu, Section 3, and his family moved to Mbekweni township in Paarl in 1985.

Due to the family's frequent movements in search of better employment opportunities, Songezo attended various schools in pursuit of his academic growth.

He started his schooling at Lwazi Primary School in Gugulethu in 1980. He proceeded to Mbekweni Higher Primary School in Paarl in 1985. During the same year, the brutal apartheid regime banned the Congress of South African Students (COSAS) and closed down black schools.

It was at the tender age of 11 years that Songezo cut his political teeth in 1985, through participating in the school boycotts as a response to the actions of the apartheid regime. It was through the 1985 school boycotts that Songezo joined the frontlines of student politics, calling for the abolishment of the apartheid school system to be replaced with democratically elected SRC and PTSA led by Joint SRC. This was the spark that gave birth to his activism in COSAS, leading to his life-long activism and dedication to the struggles of the oppressed and the poor.

Songezo's family returned to Gugulethu in 1987 and resided at Station Park. Songezo continued his studies at Vuyani Higher Primary in 1988. He proceeded to Intshukumo Comprehensive School, now known as Gugulethu Comprehensive School. He went on to Mvuze-Mvuze to complete his high school education, until he matriculated in 1994.

It was at Intshukumo Comprehensive School where he joined a group of learners who were recruited by underground comrades of the ANC to revive Congress structures, during the years the ANC was banned. These calls led to the removal of white racist Principals and police vans were planted in township schools to track down student activists. From Intshukumo, Songezo was redeployed to Mvuze-Mvuze, now Joe Slovo High in Khayelitsha as part of the project to re-establish student congress structures in township schools across Western Cape, under the Township Student Congress (TOSCO) which later unbanned COSAS. It was in TOSCO through his zeal and energy that he earned the name "Ngxamayo".

Songezo continued his vocal, vibrant and resilient activism in student politics, resulting in his election as President of the Congress of South African Students in 1993. His leadership in COSAS propelled him onto the national political scene where he continued his activism for a free, just, equal and a democratic South Africa. His capacity, abilities and dedication to the vision of an empowered and emancipated youth, led to his election onto the National Executive Committee of the militant ANC Youth League as an additional member in 1996 under the Presidency of Cde Malusi Knowledge Gigaba and Secretary-General Febe Potgieter.

He continued to grow politically from strength to strength, both in terms of knowledge accumulation and in terms of grasping deep political insights of the African National Congress.

Songezo headed the Youth Development desk of the ANCYL and was at the forefront of changing the Youth Development discourse both in the ANC, its Youth League and the country. Songezo was at the helm of the work that gave birth to South Africa's first ever Youth Development Institution, the National Youth Commission (NYC). The Youth Commission produced the first ever Youth Policy Framework in the country and Songezo infused his passionate views on youth development in this process through the ANCYL.

Songezo's work included the following well respected and loved campaigns of the ANCYL:

- Anti-substance and alcohol abuse campaign in partnership with SA Breweries
- Healthy Lifestyle Campaign focusing on HIV/AIDS Education
- Back to School Campaign

Songezo was an active participant in the ANCYL discussions focusing on financial sustainability and ability to resource its programs. This gave birth to the establishment of an Investment Company, Lembede Resources. Songezo was deployed as the Chief Executive Officer of Lembede Resources (Pty) Ltd.

He remained in the NEC of the ANC Youth League and was re-elected in successive Congresses until he exited the ANC Youth League in 2008. While he was an activist of the ANC Youth League, he belonged to an ANC branch and contributed actively to the life of his branch. Songezo was elected as the Provincial Treasurer of the ANC in the Western Cape in 2008 and subsequently elected as Provincial Secretary in 2011. This was an election which earned him the honour and privilege to serve as an ex-officio member of the ANC's National Executive Committee, the highest decision-making body of the governing party of the Republic of South Africa.

Songezo's resilience and dedication were some of his best attributes, not only in politics but also in his personal life. His love and commitment to his wife, Humile Mjongile, a union blessed with two children, Zondwa Songezo Jnr and Goapele Zenani Mjongile, is an embodiment of his dedication to family.

Whilst serving as Provincial Secretary of the ANC in the Western Cape, he lost his dear son, Sakhisizwe Mjongile, who drowned at his home swimming pool in Mbabane, Swaziland.

Songezo was a gifted soul, a brilliant mind, a humble human being and an ever-joyful person. He never shied away from a challenge and embraced tackling intractable challenge with vigour and determination. He had a big heart and was deeply passionate about the things that mattered to him the most. He was engaging, brutally honest and stood firm on his beliefs even when others held opposing views.

In March 2020, Songezo was diagnosed with colon cancer. He ended up being under medical home care with the support of doctors, his wife, mother and siblings. Songezo fought with much zeal and stoicism and gave hope to everybody that he was getting better. On the evening of the 17th of September 2020, he sadly succumbed to colon cancer.

Weeks preceding the 17th of September 2020, he took to his Facebook wall and wrote



“To all my friends and comrades. I discovered in April that I suffer from colon cancer. Chemotherapy treatment didn’t work, instead side effects have led to 2 incidents of kidney failure and mild heart attack. I survived with the grace of God. I am leaving my second lease of life and pray to God to give me power to raise my children and family. My last wish for all my sins. I wanna contribute to the renewal of the ANC and success of the NDR”.

Songezo leaves behind his parents, his wife Mrs Humile Mjongile, siblings Mrs Zuziwe Dumile, Mr Mvuzo Mjongile and Mrs Abegail Maduna, children – Mandisa, Thandolwethu, Sivikelo, Thando, Olwam, Khetho, Zondwa Songezo Jnr, Goapele Zenani, cousins, nephews and nieces.

Phumla Ngoxolo Madiba!!