

# JOSINA MUTHEMBA MACHEL

Mozambican Freedom Fighter





# GROUNDING THE STRUGGLE

## Historical & Material Context (Pre-1945)

**Pre-4th century** - Prevalence of nomadic hunter-gatherer groups

**4th century to 8th century CE** - Migration and settlement of Bantu peoples; Establishment of Indian Ocean trade, primarily in gold

**8th century to late 1400s** - Growth of coastal semi-autonomous towns and powerful inland civilizations e.g. Kingdom of Mutapa

**Early 1500s** - Arrival of Portuguese colonists

**Mid 1500s to mid 1800s** - Portuguese domination and subjugation

- 12.5 million people were enslaved and forced off their land, taken from Africa to the Americas. Portugal is responsible for transporting about 40% during more than 30,000 voyages. About 1 million people were from Mozambique (and Madagascar).
- *Prazos* system of land grants for settler-colonial exploitation
- Competition for trade with established Arab routes and for land with British colonists. Ivory replaced gold as main material export.

**1890s-1930s** - Privatization and plantations

- Multinational, private companies lease land to exploit Africans in present-day Mozambique to work plantations and construct infrastructure for trade and export e.g. rail lines to ports
- Agricultural products grown include cotton, sugar, copra (dried coconut meat for oil or livestock feed), and sisal (agave plant fiber for twine, paper, carpet, and other products)

**1926** - Coup in Portugal and Estado Novo (New State Regime)

- Authoritarian leaders intensify colonial rule
- Portuguese mass settlement with apartheid-like social relations

# AN ANTI-COLONIAL CHILDHOOD

1945

Born on August 10th, 1945 as Josina Abiathar Muthemba in Inhambane, Mozambique. She was born into a well-known anti-colonial and nationalist family. She had a twin brother named Belmiro Muthemba, along with 5 sisters and 3 other brothers. During her early education, Josina was already aware of the ways in which the Portuguese imposed assimilation on the people of Mozambique.

Her grandfather was a Presbyterian lay preacher who, like several African clergy across the continent, was strongly against colonial rule. It is known two of her uncles, father, and two sisters were imprisoned due to their involvement opposing Portuguese rule.

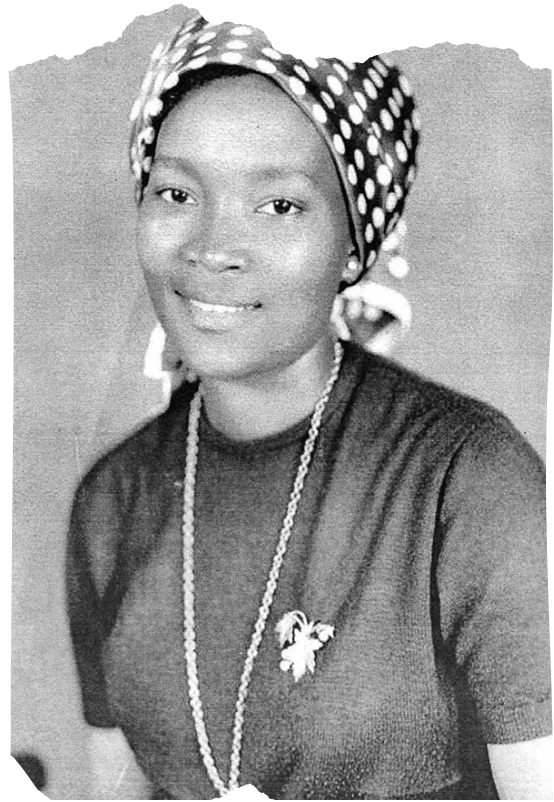


# MOVING TO THE CAPITAL

1956

In 1956 Josina moved to the capital (at the time called Lourenco Marques; now known as Maputo) to live with her grandmother and attend secondary technical school.

Eduardo Mondlane describes in his book **'The Struggle for Mozambique'** that 'although nearly 98% of the population of Mozambique is composed of black Africans, only a small proportion of children attending primary school are African, while the number of Africans in secondary school is almost negligible.' This was a disparity Josina quickly recognized and took action over.



# COMBATING COLONIAL EDUCATION

**1957**

While developing her education, she started her involvement in politics through private/secret student groups

**1958 - 1960**

At 13-yo, she became involved in the Núcleo dos Estudantes Africanos Secundários de Mocambique (NESAM), “an organisation that encouraged a positive sense of cultural identity and political education among Mozambican students.” NESAM was established by Eduardo Mondlane, who later becomes the first president of FRELIMO

**1962-1963**

In 1963 she fled Mozambique to join the armed liberation struggle against the Portuguese colonial regime. In 1965 she was captured in Zimbabwe and was imprisoned for several months. Upon leaving prison, she managed to reach FRELIMO's headquarters in the capital of Tanzania.

# CREATING PRIVATE STUDENT GROUPS

In 1956, after finishing primary education, Josina completed her fourth year of education at Lourenço Marques. As a student, she was integrated into the clandestine political activities which were mobilizing Mozambican youth.

“My parents made a great many sacrifices to send me to school. I went to commercial school for five years. My parents had to save on food and clothes. At the primary school there were only about twenty of us Africans to about a hundred Portuguese. At the commercial school there were about fifty Africans to several hundred Portuguese.”

Josina Machel



# NÚCLEO DOS ESTUDANTES AFRICANOS SECUNDÁRIOS DE MOCAMBIQUE (NESAM)

Núcleo dos Estudantes Africanos Secundários de Mocambique (**NESAM**) was a major part of the post-colonial time period in Mozambique. The organization was an underground movement to encourage a positive sense of cultural identity and political education among Mozambican students. It was closely monitored by the Portuguese police. As Mondlane remarks, it 'provided the only opportunity to study and discuss Mozambique in its own right and not as an appendage of Portugal's.

NESAM set up the stage for Josina to join FRELIMO. At 18 years old she fled the country with other students in order to join FRELIMO in Tanzania. Among her comrades were the future President of Mozambique, Armando Guebuza, and seven others (both young men and women). They failed in their endeavours for after a journey of 800 miles they were arrested at Victoria Falls in Northern Rhodesia and returned to the brutal hands of the Portuguese authorities in Lourenco Marques.





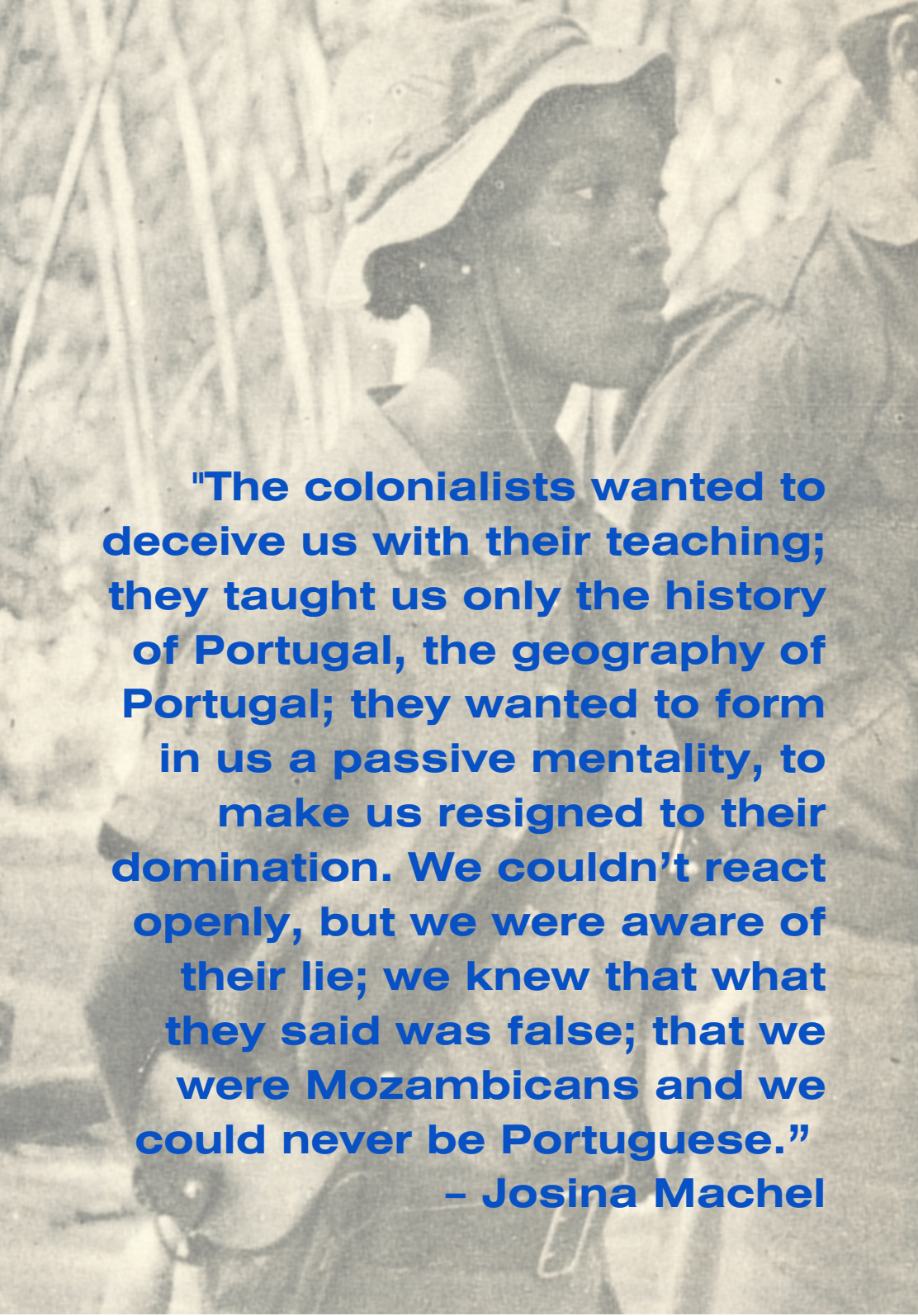
# COMBATING COLONIAL EDUCATION

She then joined the ranks of the Mozambican Liberation Front - FRELIMO. He began to work in training activities for Mozambican students in Tanzania, where she established relations with Janet Mondlane, the wife of the president of FRELIMO, Eduardo Mondlane.

## 1967- 1969

In 1967, FRELIMO offered her a scholarship to study in Switzerland, which she rejected for wanting to live the anti-colonial struggle closely and volunteered for the newly created FRELIMO women's detachment, created by Samora Machel that same year, undergoing political and military training for the national liberation struggle in Nachingwea. In 1968 she worked in the defense and organization of populations of liberated areas.

In 1968 she becomes a delegate of the Second Congress of FRELIMO, and demands the total inclusion of women in all aspects of the liberation struggle. In 1969 he became head of the Department of Social Affairs and was also head of the Women's Section in the Department of Foreign Affairs of FRELIMO.



**"The colonialists wanted to deceive us with their teaching; they taught us only the history of Portugal, the geography of Portugal; they wanted to form in us a passive mentality, to make us resigned to their domination. We couldn't react openly, but we were aware of their lie; we knew that what they said was false; that we were Mozambicans and we could never be Portuguese."**

**- Josina Machel**

# SAMORA MACHEL ON JOSINA: A POEM

April 7th, 1971 FREELIMO announced that Josina Machel had died at only 25 years old from illness. Josina was a militant revolutionary leader who found love in revolution as well as her partnership and family. Samora Machel wrote this poem to Josina after finding out the news of her passing.

## "JOSINA, YOU ARE NOT DEAD"

Josina you are not dead because we  
have assumed your responsibilities  
and they live in us.  
You have not died for the causes you  
championed were inherited  
by us in their entirety.  
You are gone from us, but the weapon  
and rucksack that you  
left, your tools of work, are part of my  
burden.  
The blood you shed is but a small drop in  
the flood we have  
already given and still have to give.  
The earth must be nourished and the  
more fertile it is the better  
do its trees flourish, the bigger are the  
shadows they cast,  
the sweeter are their fruits.  
Out of your memory I will fashion a hoe to  
turn the sod  
enriched by your sacrifice . . . And new  
fruits will grow.  
The Revolution renews itself from its best  
and most beloved  
children.  
This is the meaning of your sacrifice: it  
will be a living example to  
be followed.  
My joy is that as patriot and woman you  
died doubly free in this

time when the new power and the new  
woman are emerging.  
In your last moments you apologised to the  
doctors for not being  
able to help them.  
The manner in which you accepted the  
sacrifice is an  
inexhaustible source of inspiration and  
courage.  
When a comrade so completely assumes  
the new values he wins  
our heart, becomes our banner.  
Thus more than wife, you were to me sister,  
friend and  
Comrade-in-arms.  
How can we mourn a comrade but by  
holding the fallen gun and  
continuing the combat.  
My tears flow from the same source that  
gave birth to our love,  
our will and our revolutionary life.  
Thus these tears are both a token and a  
vow of combat.  
The flowers which fall from the tree are to  
prepare the land for  
new and more beautiful flowers to bloom in  
the next season.  
Your life continues in those who continue  
the Revolution.

# SOURCES

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