

# RUTH FIRST: A DEDICATED FORCE IN THE ANTI-APARTHEID STRUGGLE

GROUP 11

THE PEOPLE'S FORUM

# EARLY YEARS AND POLITICAL ROOTS

- Ruth First was born on May 4, 1925, to Julius and Matilda First, dedicated members of the Communist Party of South Africa (CPSA).
- Ruth First's upbringing was immersed in fervent political debates, fostering her sense of justice and activism.
- Raised in a household where passionate discussions were the norm, she developed a deep-rooted commitment to fighting injustice (Singh, 2023).
- These early experiences laid the foundation for her lifelong dedication to social change and equality.



# EDUCATION AND ACTIVISM

- ***University Years (1942 to 1946)***: Studied at the University of the Witwatersrand, alongside notable peers like Nelson Mandela, Eduardo Mondlane, and Joe Slovo.
- As a founding member of the Federation of Progressive Students (founded in 1942), Ruth First's early commitment to activism was evident.
- Her involvement showcased her dedication to advocating for change and equality, setting the stage for her influential contributions in the anti-apartheid movement and beyond.



# VOICE FOR CHANGE: JOURNALISM AND ACTIVISM

- **Journalism Career:** Ruth engaged in investigative journalism for the Guardian (1946-1964) and other platforms.
- **Key Campaigns:** Covered the Bethal scandal, bus boycott, and pass campaign, shedding light on injustice.
- **1956 Women's March**
  1. Ruth First actively protested against South Africa's oppressive pass laws, which enforced racial segregation, restricted movement, and disrupted families.
  2. These discriminatory regulations epitomized apartheid's injustices and fueled First's determination to fight for equality and justice.





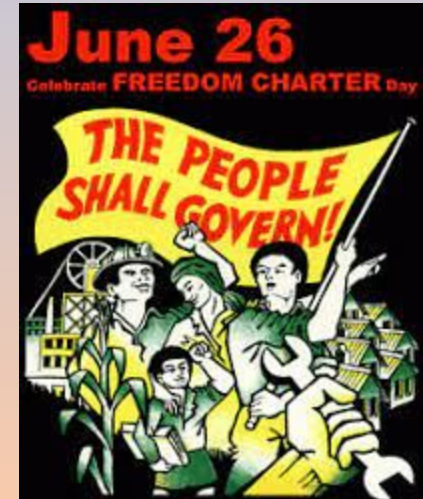
# COMMUNIST PARTY AND REPRESSION

- A dedicated member of the Communist Party of South Africa.
- **Repression Aftermath**
  - a) The aftermath of the 1946 mine workers' strike in South Africa exposed the government's brutal repression tactics.
  - b) Responding to miners' demands for fair wages and improved conditions, authorities deployed violence, resulting in casualties.
  - c) Mass arrests targeted leaders, weakening the movement. Racial divisions were exploited, revealing the government's determination to uphold apartheid and economic control through force and manipulation.
- **Crackdown on Communism**
  - a) The government's response to the Communist movement in South Africa, marked by censorship and crackdowns, had a profound impact on Ruth First's activism.
  - b) Her journalistic pursuits were curtailed, and her voice suppressed.
  - c) Despite this, First persisted in exposing injustice and advocating for change, showcasing her unwavering commitment to the struggle against apartheid.



# FREEDOM CHARTER AND TREASON TRIAL

- Ruth First played an active and pivotal role in the adoption of the Freedom Charter, tirelessly advocating for equality, justice, and the dismantling of apartheid's oppressive structures.
- **Treason Trial:** Participation in the Treason Trial of 1956, standing against oppression.
- Legacy of the Charter
  1. The Freedom Charter emerged as a powerful symbol of hope and change in South Africa's struggle against apartheid (Mazibuko, 2016).
  2. It encapsulated the aspirations of a united, non-racial society, envisioning equal rights and shared resources.
  3. This visionary document ignited the spirit of resistance, inspiring generations to strive for a just and inclusive future.



# BANNING AND EXILE

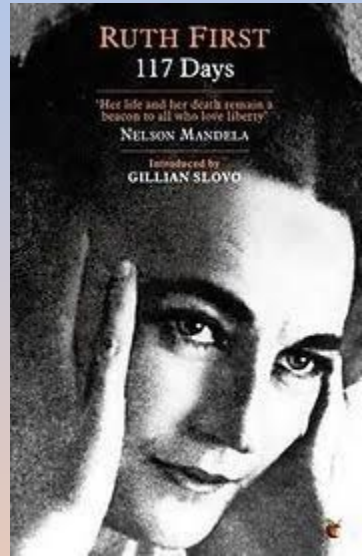
- **Government's Response:** State of Emergency after Sharpeville Massacre, leading to her banning.
- **Consequences of Banning**
  1. Ruth First's banning by the apartheid government severed her from political engagement.
  2. Restrictions barred her from attending gatherings, writing for publications, and participating in activism(Zeilig, 2014).
  3. This isolation stifled her ability to contribute directly to the anti-apartheid cause, yet her spirit endured, fueling her commitment to change from afar.
- **Exile Choice:** Decision to go into exile in the UK to continue her fight from abroad.





# EXILE AND CONTINUED ACTIVISM

- **Exile Years:** Continued as an independent researcher, producing impactful work.
- **Focus on Research:** Delve into her studies of apartheid's social structures and mechanisms of control.
- **Notable Publications**
  1. "117 Days: An Account of Confinement and Interrogation under the South African Ninety-Day Detention Law" (1965)
  2. "South West Africa: Travesty of Trust" (1967)
  3. "The Barrel of a Gun: Political Power in Africa and the Coup d'état" (1970)
  4. "Libya: The Elusive Revolution" (1974)
  5. "Black Gold: The Mozambican Miner, Proletarian, and Peasant" (1983)





# Return and Tragic End

- ***Return to Mozambique:*** Following her exile, Ruth First resettled in the UK, engaging in academic pursuits that amplified her research and activism against apartheid.
- In a heartbreaking turn, Ruth First's life was tragically cut short in 1982 when a letter bomb, a vile act of violence, ended her journey.
- This ruthless assassination was an attempt to silence her activism, but her legacy endured as a testament to the indomitable spirit of those fighting for justice.



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