



Kathy's Greatest Wish

15 October 2009 marks the 20th anniversary of Kathy's release from prison. During these last twenty years as a free man, Kathy has participated in the ushering of a democratic South Africa, cast his vote, and adjusted to a life that no longer concentrated on "fighting apartheid" but in building a better future for all South Africans.



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Ahmed Kathrada Foundation

The Ahmed Kathrada Foundation was launched on Saturday 30 August 2008. Its main focus will be on deepening non-racialism in society. With racism and xenophobia having reared their ugly heads in South Africa recently, the Foundation aims to teach generations to come that non-racialism should be something to be constantly striven for.

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Nelson Mandela Foundation

The Nelson Mandela Foundation, through the Centre of Memory and Dialogue as its core work, will contribute to the making of a just society by promoting the vision, values and work of its Founder and convening dialogue around critical social issues, while continuing to provide support to its Founder.

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KATHY:

THE MAN BEHIND THE PUBLIC FIGURE

On 21 August 2009, Ahmed Mohammed Kathrada, "Kathy" as he is fondly called, celebrated his 80th birthday. This exhibition "Kathy, the man behind the public figure" is a tribute to a remarkable hero of the South African freedom struggle, who started his lifelong commitment at the tender age of 12.

This exhibition hopes to portray the person Kathy, his sense of humour, his love of food, his many, many friends and comrades, his meticulous notes and his incredible memory.

It is the story of Kathy beneath the public veneer of a struggle icon; a personal insight into the veteran leader. It is a story not well known, except to his close friends and comrades. It is a story that is now being shared through the medium of this exhibition.

The exhibition is jointly hosted by the Ahmed Kathrada Foundation and the Nelson Mandela Foundation.



456/64 1/3777 Ahmed M. Kathrada. Sabotasie. Lewenslank. 12/6/64. DUIDAFDRUK—THUMB IMPRESSION	456/64 1/3777 Ahmed M. Kathrada. Sabotasie. Lewenslank. 12/6/64. DUIDAFDRUK—THUMB IMPRESSION
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My greatest wish would be first of all to recognise, today we are 15 years old, we are nowhere near to what we want for our democratic, non-racial, non-sexist South Africa. There's tens of thousands living in poverty, unemployment, without homes, without amenities. Alright we have done quite a bit as far as housing goes, as far as electricity goes, sanitation, nothing to ignore, it's substantial. But a lot more has to be done. What has happened now of course is that so many avenues are open and my greatest wish would be that young people must take the opportunity to study, to equip themselves better so that they can serve, they can take to the professions.

Every profession is now open. More and more people are now being given scholarships so that we want them in every profession that are open to them so that they can then use those professions to better, not only themselves and their families, but the community – South Africa. And it is only in that way that one day future generations will see what we were dreaming of, one day. So that would be my greatest wish, that there would be no more hunger, there'll be no children without proper clothing, food, hospitalisation, everything. But that is a society that we wish will come in, in the years to come. Today there are more and more opportunities, more assistance, and people should take advantage of that. So that goes with what I am saying, what my wish is for the future.



KATHY THE FOOD LOVER

Whoever knows Kathy knows that he loves food. Mince and peas, biryani, ice cream and chocolate. Being in prison turned food into a fantasy as he and his colleagues were obliged to eat what was served them. Food was a site of struggle and often their only weapon used in various hunger strikes to press for better conditions. Food was not just limited, badly prepared and under-nourishing, it was racially discriminatory. Indian and Coloured prisoners were fed more and slightly better than African prisoners. The hurt Kathy felt over this discrimination is reflected in the title of the Indian version of his memoirs called *No Bread for Mandela*.



KATHY THE CHILDREN'S MAN

His life cut short at the age of 33, when he was arrested in the raid on Liliesleaf on 11 July 1963, meant the end of any hope of a normal life for Kathy and certainly the end of the possibility of fatherhood. Although he and his colleagues expected the death sentence, they were sentenced to life imprisonment less than a year later. The most severe deprivation of all in prison, according to Kathy, was the deprivation of children. Children under 16 were not allowed to visit. Kathy and his comrades began to yearn for the sound of them.

KATHY THE GALLANT

With his film star good looks and charm, the young Kathy was not immune to attraction of young women. While he started exploring relationships while still at school, his life was marked by two loves. The first was Sylvia Neame, a comrade in the Communist Party whom he met in Cape Town, during the relaxation between his second and third banning orders. The second is Barbara Hogan, who was released from prison shortly before Mandela in 1990. Kathy met her soon thereafter and it was on the plane journey during Mandela's first trip to England after his release that this new relationship would blossom. Kathy and Barbara remain life partners to this day.

KATHY THE RECORD KEEPER

Kathy the political activist became Kathy the record-keeper when he was told that he would spend the rest of his life in prison. Forced, through prison restrictions, which included that he may only write and receive one letter of 500 words each, every six months, only to family, Kathy began making copies of each letter he wrote. When he was released from prison in 1989, he came out with 900 carbon copies of letters and all his incoming mail.

KATHY THE CELEBRITY

After Madiba was elected president of South Africa on 9 May 1994, he asked Kathy to be his Parliamentary Counsellor. Along with the job came a sharing of some of the demands placed on Madiba from celebrities, presidents and royalty from around the world. Madiba asked Kathy to help and so it came that everyone from Fidel Castro to Bill Clinton, from Barack Obama to the young cancer patient, Michelle Brits, had the benefit of Kathy's personal tour of Robben Island.



KATHY THE DRIVER

As with everything else in his life and political career, Kathy began driving at a young age. It was behind the wheel of his father's black Oldsmobile that he was taught to drive at the age of 11. He was 16 when he got his license, and in 1946 drove the Passive Resistance Council office car where he began working full-time. Thereafter his driving skills were utilized often, and Kathy was asked to drive one leader or another to some or other event. In 1962 he drove Moses Kotane to Durban to see Chief Albert Luthuli and a British journalist to a secret venue where he filmed Madiba announcing the reason for the turn by the ANC to the armed struggle.

KATHY THE PEOPLE'S HISTORIAN

Kathy and his colleagues always had in mind that one day, someone would record the history of the liberation movement. While still in prison he assisted Madiba in the creation of the foundation manuscript of his autobiography, *Long Walk to Freedom*. Kathy and Walter Sisulu wrote comments on Madiba's first drafts and his final version was transcribed into tiny handwriting by Laloo Chiba and Mac Maharaj. For their trouble they lost their studies for four years after the prison authorities found the drafts, in their handwriting, buried in canisters.



21 AUGUST 1929

Ahmed Mohammed Kathrada was born to Indian immigrants in Schweizer-Reneke, a rural town about 300km from Johannesburg

1938

Left Schweizer-Reneke for Johannesburg to attend school because there were no schools for Indians in his hometown

1941

Joined the Young Communist League

1945-1946

Helped to form the Transvaal Indian Youth Congress and was later elected as Chairman

1951-1952

Headed the South African delegation to the World Festival of Youth and Students in Berlin; worked at the headquarters of the World Federation of Democratic Youth for nine months in Budapest

1946

Left school to work for the Passive Resistance Council and served his first jail sentence in Durban

1952

Accused in trial of leaders of Defiance Campaign; received 9 months suspended sentence

1953

Became secretary of the Youth Action Committee of the ANC Youth League and Indian Youth Congress. Elected to the executive of the World Federation of Democratic Youth

1954

Banned from gatherings and ordered to resign from 39 organisations

1956

Arrested with 155 others in the Treason Trial. Was among the final 30 accused who were acquitted in 1961

1954-1956

Active in organising Congress of the People where the Freedom Charter was drafted. Secretary of Central Indian High School Parents Association - a private school established to combat the Group Areas Act

1961-1962

Became one of the earliest recruits of Umkhonto we Sizwe (MK), and served on the Regional Command for a brief spell

1962

Became secretary of the Free Mandela Committee when Mandela was arrested in August. Placed under House Arrest

1963

Instructed by the South African Communist Party to go "underground"; vacated Flat 13 Kholvad House and moved to Liliesleaf Farm

1963-1964

Arrested and sentenced to life imprisonment in the Rivonia Trial together with Nelson Mandela, Walter Sisulu, Govan Mbeki, Raymond Mhlaba, Denis Goldberg, Elias Motsoaledi and Andrew Mlangeni

1964-1989

Served sentence on Robben Island and Pollsmoor Prison

1991

Elected to the NEC of ANC and became Head of ANC Public Relations Department

1992

Went on Hajj Pilgrimage to Mecca with his brother Solly and family

1994

Elected Member of Parliament and served as Mandela's Parliamentary Counsellor until 1999

1994

Elected Chairperson of the Robben Island Museum Council and served until his term expired in 2006

1997

Declined nomination to the ANC National Executive Committee

1999

Appointed as a trustee of the Nelson Mandela Foundation, which was set up to support Mandela during his retirement

2008

Established the Ahmed Kathrada Foundation to promote non-racialism

