

# Archibald Gumede (1914-1998)

## ORDER OF LUTHULI IN SILVER (POSTHUMOUS)

AWARDED TO  
ARCHIBALD GUMEDE  
FOR EXCEPTIONAL  
LEADERSHIP AND  
LIFE-LONG DEDICATION TO  
THE STRUGGLE FOR THE  
IDEALS OF A FREE, JUST  
AND DEMOCRATIC  
SOUTH AFRICA



Archie Gumede was born in Pietermaritzburg in 1914 and matriculated in 1932 from the Lovedale Missionary Institute in the Eastern Cape. Gumede subsequently studied at the South African Native College (subsequently called University of Fort Hare) but dropped out after two years due to his political work.

Gumede joined the ANC, becoming Pietermaritzburg assistant branch secretary in 1949 and assistant secretary for the Natal ANC in 1951. He participated in ANC campaigns against Bantu education, the extension of pass laws to women and the forced removals in Charlestown and Roosboom in northern Natal. He was among those charged in the infamous 1956 Treason Trial.

In 1976, before the Soweto uprisings, Gumede participated in the formation of an Education Action Committee to deal with the problems at African schools. In the aftermath of the Soweto riots, he became active in the Parents' Committee established in the Durban area. In 1979, Gumede was instrumental in the establishment of the Release Mandela Committee of which he became chairman.

At its launch in August 1983, Gumede was elected president of the UDF, along with Oscar Mpetha and Albertina Sisulu. He was re-elected president in April 1985 at the UDF's first annual conference in Azaadville, Krugersdorp. In May 1990, he formed part of the ANC delegation that first met government representatives to open discussions on the ending of apartheid at Groote Schuur in Cape Town.

Archie Gumede has been banned, detained and arrested many times, yet never faltered. Over the decades, and when the harassment, persecution and detention of senior political leaders were at its worse, this stalwart of the struggle remained firm and unwavering, a veritable beacon of hope and guidance for many generations.