

# *Charlotte Maxeke* (1874 – 1939)

ORDER OF LUTHULI IN GOLD (POSTHUMOUS)



**AWARDED TO  
CHARLOTTE MAXEKE  
FOR HER EXCEPTIONAL  
CONTRIBUTION TO THE  
STRUGGLE FOR WOMEN'S  
AND WORKERS' RIGHTS,  
AND LIFE-LONG  
DEDICATION TO THE  
STRUGGLE FOR PEACE,  
JUSTICE AND  
HUMAN RIGHTS**

Charlotte Maxeke received missionary education in the Eastern Cape and became a teacher in Kimberley in the Northern Cape. As a member of a Christian choir group, she joined a tour to the United States (US). After the tour she enrolled for a Bachelor of Science (B.Sc.) degree at the Wilberforce University in Cleveland, US, an institute of the African Methodist Episcopal Church. She became the first African woman from South Africa to be awarded a B.Sc. degree.

In 1913, Maxeke led a campaign in the Orange Free State against the carrying of passes by women. She was a leading figure in the founding of the Bantu Women's League, a constituent member organisation of the South African Native National Congress, the original name of the ANC.

In 1918, as leader of this organisation, she led a delegation to Prime Minister Louis Botha to make representations on the pending implementation of passes for women. The following year, Maxeke led a protest against its implementation.

Maxeke was also involved in the founding of the Industrial and Commercial Worker's Union in 1920.

Charlotte Maxeke has often been referred to as the 'Mother of Black Freedom in South Africa' and an ANC nursery school has been named after her in Tanzania.