

Phyllis Naidoo (1927 –)

ORDER OF LUTHULI IN SILVER



**AWARDED TO
PHYLLIS NAIDOO
FOR OUTSTANDING
CONTRIBUTION TO HUMAN
RIGHTS AND THE
STRUGGLE AGAINST
APARTHEID**

Phyllis Naidoo was born in Estcourt in KwaZulu-Natal in 1928 and from an early age was active in the Non-European Unity Movement (NEUM).

As a student, and later a teacher at Natal University (Non-European section), she organised a Human Rights Committee which helped to raise funds for the 1956 Treason Trialists and their families. Naidoo was a member of the Natal Indian Congress (NIC) and the South African Communist Party (SACP) and with her husband, MD Naidoo, and Govan Mbeki, did underground support work for ANC cadres. After being placed under a banning order and house arrest in March 1966, she began to study law and qualified as a lawyer in 1973. She set up her legal practice when her banning order was lifted in 1976. She made a point of employing ex-Robben Island prisoners in her practice – including at one stage Jacob Zuma, the current Deputy President.

On 23 July 1977, Naidoo was forced to flee to Lesotho, where she continued to work for the ANC. She assisted members of the SACP and ANC to escape from South Africa, and provided support for them as well as to the scores of youth skipping the borders in the aftermath of the Soweto student uprisings.

In 1983, she fled Lesotho and settled in Zimbabwe.