

The unveiling of the Nokuthula Simelane Statue



Family members at the unveiling of Nokuthula Simelane's statue

A drum majorette-led procession signified the official beginning of the unveiling ceremony of the Nokuthula Simelane statue on a bright Bethal afternoon on November 28, 2009.. The procession, which included Mpumalanga province dignitaries, Nokuthula's old struggle contemporaries, family and friends marched about a hundred metres from the town hall to the newly refurbished cultural precinct where an expectant crowd awaited the canonisation of one of the struggle's hitherto unsung heroine.

In what was a triumphant occasion, marked by the sobering realisation that Nokuthula's remains are still buried in some unknown hinterland, several speakers took to the podium to pay tribute to the Simelane daughter's defiance at the hands of her capturers.



There was also the obvious fact that the unveiling of the statue represented unfinished business, in terms of establishing the whereabouts of Nokuthula's remains. Thembi Nkadimeng, Nokuthula's sister, has spearheaded this cause with the assistance of the Constitutional Litigation Unit of the Legal Resources Centre. Among the speakers who took to the podium were current Transport Ministry director-general Zakhele Thwala, the commander of Nokuthula's ill-fated Johannesburg mission and Duma Nkosi, who was the last ally to see Nokuthula alive.



Zakhele Thwala, current Transport Ministry Director General. He was the Umkhonto we Sizwe commander of Nokuthula's mission to Joburg

The lifesize Nokuthula Simelane statue forms a pivotal part of the Bethal Cultural Precinct, a revitalisation project in the centre of town that not only celebrates the town's struggle giants but transforms the square into a vibrant meeting, entertainment centre and trading spot. The statue also represents a visual and conceptual link between the Gert Sibande statue and the museum, signifying and honouring the cross-gender and cross-generational contribution to the struggle by Bethal residents.



Nokuthula in Bronze with Sculptor Rohan Janse van Vuuren