

From Meadowlands to Libya: Love, family and the betrayal of freedom



Abstract: Women's armed struggle memoirs show that the love of self, that is tied to the broader project of national liberation, is punctuated by a sense of courage, joy, adventure, longstanding solidarity, friendship and family. In this lecture, I centre the ways in which love appears in the writing of 17 women former liberation fighters, who fought as part of South Africa's armed struggle against apartheid.

These liberation fighters were women who belonged to uMkhonto we Sizwe (MK), the military wing of the African National Congress (ANC), the Azanian People's Liberation Army (APLA) of the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC), and the Azanian National Liberation Army (AZANLA) of the Azanian People's Organisation (AZAPO).

By surfacing women's political awakening, education and militarisation, love is defined as the ethic that ignites women into political struggle to liberate themselves, their communities and the nation.

I focus on how women defined and established romantic connection and family in the tenuous context of the transnational anti-apartheid movement. I also discuss how these women have had to negotiate anguish, grief, and the betrayal of the dreams and visions they had for a free and democratic South Africa.

Siphokazi Magadla is a STIAS Fellow and is Associate Professor in Political and International Studies at Rhodes University. She teaches and researches war and militarism in Africa, the armed struggle in South Africa, women and South African foreign policy, and African feminisms, gender, and citizenship. She is the author of the book, *Guerrillas and Combative Mothers: Women and the Armed Struggle in South Africa* (UKZN Press, 2023; Routledge, 2024), which won the National Institute for the Humanities and Social Sciences (NIHSS) Humanities and Social Sciences Award for Best Non-Fiction Monograph; the Rhodes University Vice Chancellor's Book Award, and the Academy of Science of South Africa (ASSAf) Humanities Book Award in the Established Scholar category. She is also the co-editor of two books, *Inyathi Ibuzwa Kwabaphambili: Theorising South African Women's Intellectual Legacies* (Mandela University Press, 2024) and *Ubuntu: Curating the Archive* (UKZN Press, 2014), as well as co-editor of a journal special issue: "Thirty years of Male Daughters, Female Husbands: Revisiting Ifi Amadiume's Questions on Gender, Sex and Political Economy" (2021) in the *Journal of Contemporary African Studies*.

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