

INTERNATIONAL

# The nine lives of Winnie Mandela

**By Gumisai Mutume**  
Special to Sentinel-Voice  
JOHANNESBURG, South Africa (IPS) — Outspoken politician Winnie Madikizela-Mandela has often had her back to the wall, but whenever analysts have predicted her political demise, she has been able to bounce back.

The ex-wife of South African president Nelson Mandela faces yet another battle.

Madikizela-Mandela is scheduled to appear before the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) — a body set up to investigate apartheid-era human rights violations — to answer allegations over her role in 18 human rights abuses, including eight murders.

At the same time, she has been nominated by the African National Congress Women's League (ANCWL) of which she is president, as its candidate for the ruling party's deputy presidency, to be contested at its December conference.

Madikizela-Mandela's latest battle involves an allegation that she killed 14 year-old activist Seipei Stompie. The claim was made by Katiza Cebekhulu in the book "Katiza's Journey" by journalist Fred Bridgland.

Cebekhulu is a former member of the Mandela United Football Club (MUFC), a group of Soweto youths who served as Winnie Mandela's bodyguards at the height of her anti-apartheid activities.

The man jailed for Seipei's murder, Jerry Richardson, alleged recently in a South African Broadcasting Corporation interview that he killed another activist, Kuki Zwane, on the orders of Madikizela-Mandela. And another former member of her entourage, Nicholas Dlamini, claimed that he murdered Dr. Abu Baker Asvat — who examined Seipei before his death — on her instructions.

The TRC will also examine whether Madikizela-Mandela had a hand in the murder of MUFC members who had fallen out with her.

TRC investigative head Dumisa Ntsebeza has said that the hearing will only try to establish whether there were any human rights violations and if there were, the commission would then proceed with investigations. However the hearing will not be conducted on camera and evidence will not be made public despite calls by Madikizela-Mandela for a public hearing so that she can

absolve herself.

She alleges it is all a ploy by people within the African National Congress (ANC) to scupper her bid for the vice-presidency.

Should this be true it would not be the first time she has been the target of 'dirty tricks.'

In a post-1990 operation, police agents set out on an anti-Winnie campaign in which they planted both fact and fiction in the local and foreign media about criminal activities of the MUFC.

Former policeman Paul Erasmus went public in June last year and claimed that he coordinated the campaign, which may have contributed to her divorce in early 1996 from President Nelson Mandela, to whom she had been married for 38 years.

On the political front she managed to sail past opponents and be re-elected president of the ANCWL in July this year despite a crisis that came to a head in 1995, when 11 members of the league's national executive, led by ANC veteran Adelaide Tambo, walked out in protest at her leadership.

Issues that emerged during that time were the question marks hanging over a cheque for 350,000 rand that she received from Pakistan as head of the women's league and allegations that she was involved in dubious diamond-dealing in Angola.

Madikizela-Mandela had made a dramatic comeback in the ANCWL before. In 1992,

she had been forced to withdraw from her position in the women's league provincial office, and all other posts she held in the ANC following allegations that she had abused party funds.

By December 1993, she was back as ANCWL president.

In an editorial on March 24, 1995 the "Mail and Guardian" newspaper dubbed her "the Mohammed Ali of the ANC... though Ali limited himself to three returns to the championship and one spell in jail while Madikizela-Mandela has had at least half-a-dozen of each.

"Her political stamina is extraordinary — and even her harshest critics have to appreciate her ability to return from overseas facing a fraud investigation, immediately rush to court to challenge police actions, rally her forces behind her, refuse to give an inch — and win," the editorial said.

In March 1995, her political life had seemed over when police raided her Soweto home. However it became a big embarrassment when the police and justice department committed blunders, and thus failed to raise a case against her.

Now she faces yet another test and some feel she will emerge even stronger from it.

"I think she will become deputy president of the party," says a source within ANC. "People are closing ranks, they feel the organization is being infiltrated by external forces. Some who may not have been on her side are sympathizing (See Mandela, Page 13)



MANDELA

## Ghana opposes U.S. embargo against Cuba

CAPE COAST, Ghana (PANA) — Ghanaian President Jerry Rawlings has lashed out at the United States' embargo against Cuba, saying it is "morally wrong." He said to deny a sovereign state the benefits derived from external trade is indefensible.

Rawlings was addressing the second Africa-Cuba solidarity conference at the University of Cape Coast, a follow-up to the initial meeting held in South Africa in 1996.

The four-day conference, under the theme "Free Trade and National Sovereignty," was attended by delegates from several countries, including Angola, Cuba, Mozambique, Nigeria, South Africa and the United States.

Rawlings said attempts by the United States to broaden the embargo to cover trade between Cuba and other countries has generated legitimate international concern.

Ghana is against the Helms-Burton embargo, which forbids U.S. overseas subsidiaries to trade with Cuba and threatens to punish any country that trades with the island nation. Ghana is against any law that violates two important principles of international law - non-interference in the internal affairs of another and the right of all nations to determine their own paths of social development, Rawlings told the conference.

Increasing opposition to the tightening of the embargo against Cuba, he said, has weakened the U.S. position because its own allies — the European Union, Canada, Japan and several Latin American states — consider it without any basis in international law.

## AIDS screening of immigrants called unfair

LUSAKA, Zambia (AIA/GIN) — Human rights activists in Zambia are angry over requirements by many countries that immigrants and visitors undergo mandatory HIV testing, calling the practice "inhuman" and discriminatory.

The situation was highlighted in a recent case involving three Zambian journalists who were refused entry into Canada after testing positive for HIV. Human rights activists have called on world bodies to take up the situation as a human rights issue and are demanding redress for those who they say are "injured" by such discrimination.

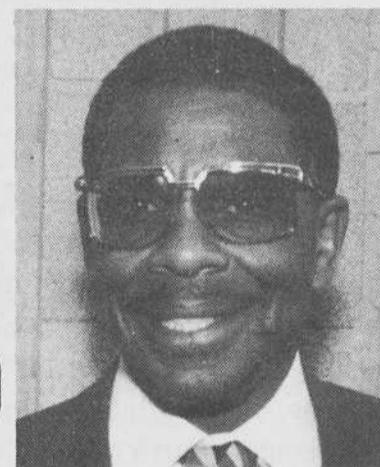
Countries feel that by not admitting people who are HIV positive they can lessen the infection rate. However, the World Health Organization (WHO) has denounced the practice as ineffective. The mandatory testing has made some Zambians more cautious when choosing countries for advanced studies.

"We now take into consideration the country's policy regarding HIV/AIDS testing. For example, I have accepted that I will not even apply to the United States or Canada for training — not because I am HIV positive, but because I refuse to be forced to undergo a test," said Martin Mwamba, a physiotherapist.

Some Zambians see the practice as having racial overtones. Winston Zulu, an AIDS activist, says it is strange that it is mostly the developed countries where a majority of the population is white that are insisting on this compulsory testing, while developing countries "meekly allow their people to be led like rabbits" to the laboratories for testing.

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