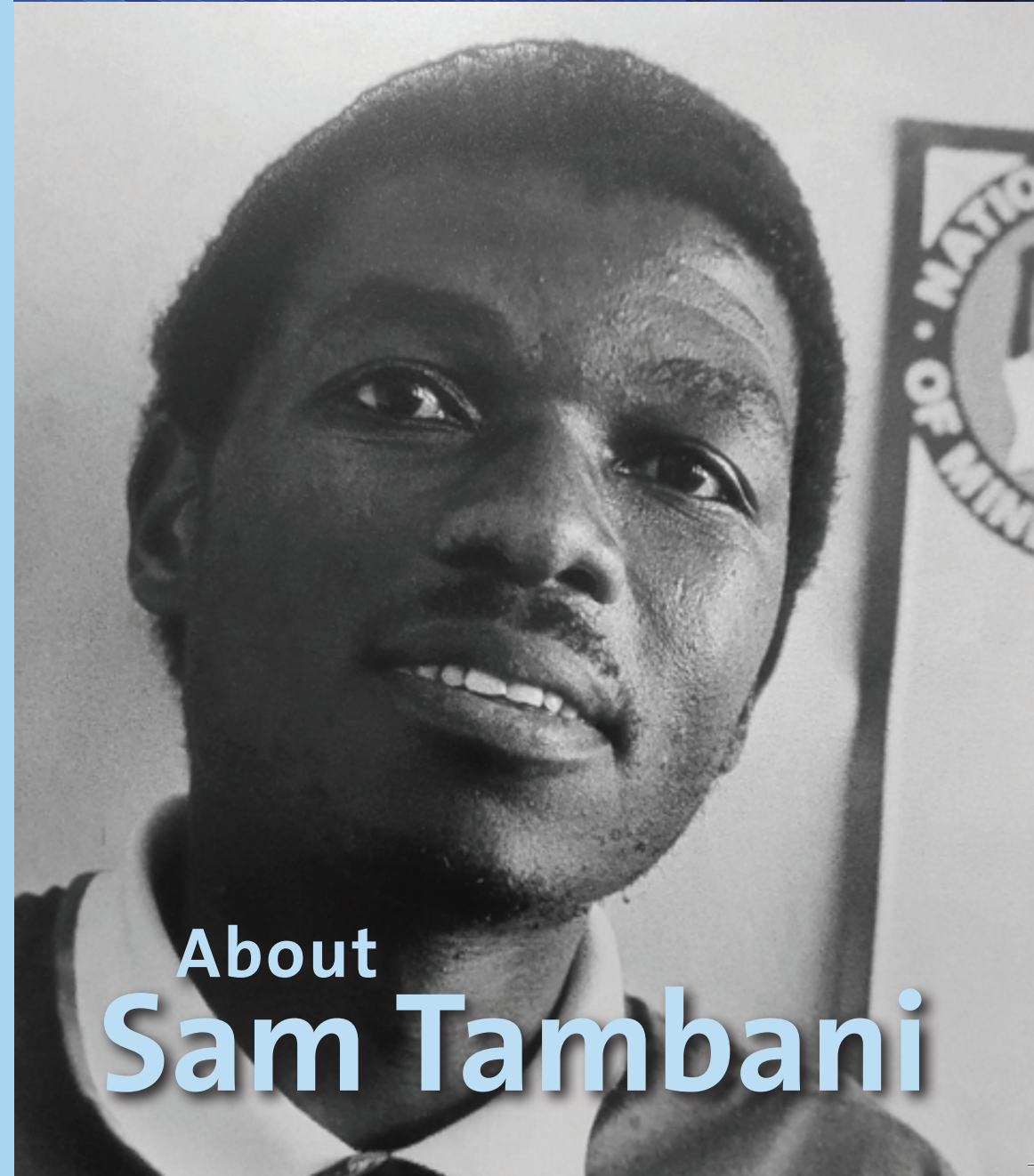




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Sam Tambani - A Political Activist, Trade Unionist and Community Leader

Sam Tambani was born on 26 August 1953, in Tshiozwi Ha-Sinthumule village in Venda, Northern Transvaal (now Limpopo Province). Sam was the first child of Kutama Fridah Tambani and Nkhumeleni Jack Tambani.

He attended primary school at Mukhudwana Junior Primary School, and subsequently enrolled at Sinthumule Secondary School in Venda. He passed Form 1 (now grade 8) in 1969, but unfortunately left school at an early age, due to financial challenges.

In 1970, he started working at Magovheli Supermarket and Furniture in Venda, where he was delivering furniture. Like so many others, in 1971, he was forced to look for work in Johannesburg. In 1972, he was employed by Gundelfinger where he worked for seven years. In 1979, he was employed by Anglo American Corporation as a Security Guard and in 1981 he was promoted to Purchasing Clerk.

In 1979, Sam was involved in the Black Workers Union (BAWU), a progression of the General and Workers Union (GAWU). He became a member of GAWU in 1980 and within four years he was elected as a National Executive Committee member until the dissolution of GAWU in 1987 as a result of the formation of COSATU in 1985. As a GAWU Executive Committee member, Sam represented the Union as a permanent delegate to the Transvaal region of the United Democratic Front (UDF). He was also involved in the earlier initiatives that resulted in the formation of UDF and the resuscitation of the Transvaal Indian Congress (TIC). In 1983, he participated fully in the structures of the UDF and helped to set up branches in Soweto.

Preceding the Black Local Authorities Elections (BLAE) that were to be held in 1983, GAWU initiated a meeting of all organizations ascribing to the Freedom Charter to agree on a common approach on how to deal with BLAE. The results of this meeting was the formation of the Anti-Community Council Committee (ACCC). Sam became one of the Union's representatives in the ACCC. This marked

the start of his active involvement in the civic matters. After the successful campaign against BLAE, in 1984, Sam was instrumental in the formation of mass based Soweto Civic Association (SCA).

As a result of his starting work in these structures, in 1982, he was recruited into the underground structures of the South African Communist Party (SACP). From the mid-80's he served in the underground structures of the South African Congress of Trade Unions (SACTU) and those of the African National Congress (ANC). He became the Secretary of the ANC Soweto sub-region in 1992. He was instrumental in the formation of the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) in 1985. Sam was a much-loved and popular leader of COSATU, ANC and SACP in the then Witwatersrand region.

In 1986, Sam became a member of the National Union of Mine Workers (NUM) and immediately assumed a leadership role in the Union. He was the Chairperson of National Educational Sub-Committee (NESCO) and a member of NUM National Executive Committee. As an education activist and as one who was himself deprived of education, Sam was interested in upgrading the educational level of the miners. He believed in sustainable leadership and training of future leaders. He introduced the Education Blitz campaign, with the aim of imparting maximum knowledge to senior shaft stewards within a month. He gave them intensive training on trade union work and imparted general political knowledge to the miners.

Comrade Sam was killed by apartheid police on 14 April 1993 at Protea Police Station in Soweto. He was shot by Protea Policemen when they opened fire on peaceful crowd protesting against Chris Hani's murder.

In remembrance of his works and in keeping alive the ideals that he stood, the National Union of Mine Workers and the Mineworkers Investment established a research institute, in 2012, to undertake research on workers issues which they named Sam Tambani Research Institute (SATRI)