

Your smiling and simple faces  
gave hope to Sarmcol workers' struggle  
to our liberation struggle

Your death now  
comrades  
proclaims our earthly triumph.

## Sarmcol killings

The people of Mpophomeni, the striking Sarmcol workers and MAWU remember Phineas Sibiya, Florence Mnikathi, Simon Ngubane and Alpheus Nkabinde. "We will never forget you, we will never give up the cause you died for" are the words of the poster to commemorate their lives, what they stood for and what they did as leaders and activists in Mpophomeni.

Phineas Sibiya was chairperson of the Sarmcol shopstewards, a leader of the cooperative movement and a MAWU regional worker leader. Simon Ngubane was a Sarmcol shopsteward, a leader within the cooperative's cultural wing and leading performer in the Sarmcol play. Florence Mnikathi was a Sarmcol health committee activist and a daughter of one of the Sarmcol strikers. Alpheus Nkabinde was a youth activist in Mpophomeni.

On December 5 Phineas, Florence, and Simon were abducted from the township of Mpophomeni and brutally murdered. On that same night Alpheus was killed in the township. The entire community was shaken and together with the union struck with grief and anger. Union leaders alleged that those responsible for the killings were vigilantes led by Inkatha sympathisers and occupying the local community hall in Mpophomeni during that night. The Bureau of Information in a statement issued soon after the killings confirmed the involvement of Inkatha sympathisers in the killings. The police, perched on buses, and threatening to shoot tear smoke at the angered community, escorted the suspects out of Mpophomeni the following morning.

Police continued to make their presence felt in the community in

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the week between the killings and the burials. Homes were visited, police dogs were brought in and the streets were patrolled. The state imposed severe restrictions on the funerals, preventing the families, the community and the union membership from commemorating and burying their dead in the way they would have chosen. Police roadblocks turned back the buses of workers who were coming to bury their comrades. The number of people in the hall was severely restricted so that even those coming on foot were turned back. There were no songs of struggle, no shouts of 'Amandla'. The grief that hung over the hall turned to sobs as the MAWU President broke down, crying, in the middle of his speech on Phineas. The interpreter, attempting to relate what the president was saying also broke down sobbing. Casspirs and police vans lined the field outside the hall. At the graveside stood two casspirs, with soldiers on top watching obscenely as the burials took place.

Arrests have been made in connection with the killings and the matter will be brought to court. The striking workers and the community will not forget Phineas, Simon, Florence and Alpheus as they continue their court battle and their work in the co-op.

(Shamim Marie, January 1987)

## Shootings at MAWU AGM

About 25 workers were injured and 1 killed - Simon Mchunu - in a brutal shotgun attack on MAWU workers as they were leaving their AGM on November 15. About 10,000 workers were at the meeting. As workers began dispersing to find their buses to return home, police fired teargas, fired shotguns and chased workers with sjamboks. The union called for a day of commemoration on December 1 to be marked by all MAWU members and progressive organisations; but the union warned: "This is not just a day of mourning. It is a day to renew our commitment to the struggle. We are demanding that the killings must stop. We demand the right to hold meetings without harassment or fear of being shot. This is a basic human right. We demand that Moses Mayekiso and all our leaders be released."

(MAWU communique, 20.11.87)