



## KRISHNA RABILAL

**“COMMUNITY WORKER,  
REVOLUTIONARY, SOLDIER &  
MARTYR”**

(6 Nov 1952- 30 Jan 1981)

*The brutality of the Apartheid regime during the Matola Raid was intended to silence Krishna Rabibal and the rest of the twelve martyrs who were massacred at Matola. However, it had the inverse effect of immortalizing him and making his name a rallying cry for the thousands of youth that followed him into the struggle for a free, democratic and non-racial South Africa. The legend of Krishna Rabibal will live on in the hearts and minds of freedom-loving people of Merbank and South Africa. One of ours who gave his life so that the dream of a free, just and non-racial South Africa may LIVE ON!*

**“Krish was sleeping on a mat on the floor and when the first rocket hit, a wall collapsed on him. Oozing blood, he managed to crawl out and go to the bathroom. But he was found and was shot in the face at pointblank range.”**

This was part of the chilling testimony of Sunny Singh, an MK Commander who was instrumental in recruiting Krishna into the ANC and who was stationed in Mozambique for nine years.

Krishna died on the battlefield. His heroism and that of the all the twelve martyrs was heralded by both Oliver Tambo and Samora Machel, the presidents of the ANC and Frelimo in Mozambique. A Solidarity of blood between these fraternal organizations was forged on that fateful day in Matola.

### **SOUTH AFRICANS WHO DIED AT MATOLA, 31 JANUARY 1981**

- 1.Mduduzi Guma
- 2.Lancelot Hadebe
- 3.Mandla Daka
- 4.Daniel Molokisi
- 5.Steven Ngcobo
- 6.Vusumzi Ngwema
- 7.Thabang Bookolane
- 8.Krishna Rabibal
- 9.Themba Dimba
- 10.William Khanyile
- 11.Motso “Obadi” Mokgabud
- 12.Collin Khumalo
- 13.Levinson Mankankaza
- 14.Albert Mahutso
- 15.Vuyani Mavuso\*

**\*Vuyani Mavuso, who was kidnapped during the raid, was later executed by the apartheid security agencies when he refused to betray his comrades.**



**(THE MONUMENT IN MATOLA DEDICATED TO KRISHNA RABILAL AND THE REST OF THE FALLEN MK SOLDIERS)**

## EARLY YEARS IN MEREBANK

Krishna Rabibal was born to working class parents in the township of Merebank in the south of Durban. He was the 3<sup>rd</sup> of 10 children. Krishna was a quiet, unassuming young man who from a very early age began to notice the effect of poverty and discrimination on his people.

Whilst Krishna was a brilliant student, excelling in both mathematics and physical science, he hated the Afrikaans language. He called it the language of the oppressor. He felt so strongly about this issue that he refused to study Afrikaans on principle-

He joined the active community organizations in the area in the hope that he could impact the community and make a difference via his socio-welfare and community work. At various times he was a member of Merewent Ex-Students Society, Merewent Ratepayers Association, Merebank Community Centre, Merebank Bus Passengers Association and the Natal Indian Congress. He was also involved in the production of a community newspaper called The Sentinel, which had a strong political slant, evoking community consciousness on issues such as the bread price, workers' problems, etc. He also did a great deal of social work with families of exiles and detainees.

## FAMILY BACKGROUND...

Krishna's decision to focus his time and energies on community upliftment issues rather than profit or career initiatives was a deliberate and considered one. The Rabibal family was not a wealthy one, nor was it economically comfortable even by working class standards. For the family to survive, let alone thrive or prosper, it required all working hands on deck.

That made Krishna's sacrifice all the more weightier and intense. He did so with the full knowledge that if he was prohibited from working, either by detention, imprisonment or exile, his actions would have the inevitable consequence of bringing great economic hardship and suffering to his nuclear family.

*Krishna Rabibal was not alone in this quandary. Thousands of youth from around the country and at various times in our Struggle had to put country before family so that we may enjoy the Freedoms we do today!*

## THE TURNING POINT

The 1976 student uprising, starting as a revolt against the teaching in the medium of Afrikaans had profound effect on Krishna. In the words of his brother, Nundlall Rabibal, who gave evidence at the Truth and Reconciliation Commission- **Case No ZJ/035:**

**"He fully identified with the black students protests against the teaching in the medium of Afrikaans which culminated in the 1976 student uprising. He saw that attempts to get the white government to change were futile. He now began to talk in terms of a just war, and he was now inextricably involved in politics. He would bring banned books home, books on Karl Marx, Fidel Castro, Martin Luther King, Chekhov, and so on..."**

The journey of Krishna Rabibal, the Community Worker had ended and the journey to **Krishna Rabibal, a.k.a Goodwin, the Revolutionary and Soldier had commenced.** His deep involvement in the struggle led to constant harassment by the Security Police. The Security Police then began harassing him at work. They raided Dayglow Stationers in Durban, where he worked, and also the premises of Bargain Furniture in Beatrice Street, where he also later worked. They kept a very close check on him, and even began monitoring his movements from home to work and his other social and community activities.

Sunny Singh, an MK Commander and 10-year term Robben Island prisoner, had upon his release from prison, recruited Krishna Rabibal and fellow Merebank Activist, Vis Pillay (Ivan) into ANC structures in South Africa. Following the arrest of Shadrack Maphumalo, both Daya Pillay (Joe) and Pat Msomi had to withdraw to Swaziland in May 1977. Fearing further arrests, both Krish and Ivan were instructed to also leave South Africa. They left in August 1977.

Both of them entered Botswana illegally and were arrested by the Botswana Police and detained. When they proved that they were genuine refugees they were released after one night into the custody of the Refugee Committee in Botswana. As members of the ANC underground they then proceeded to ANC Headquarters in Lusaka.

## **LIFE IN UmKHONTO weSIZWE AND EXILE**

**Krish was identified by Umkhonto we Sizwe as a potential combatant to return to South Africa.** He was given the *nomme de guerre* Goodwin and sent to a transit house in Lunda, Angola and then on to Funda, a transit camp in Caxito (Northern Angola). These transit facilities were used for cadres who would return home after crash courses in political theory and military and combat. At Funda, he was **selected to be part of a platoon that went to the Ernest Thaelmann Academy in Rostock, East Germany.** There, his proficiency in mathematics held him in good stead. He trained in firearms, explosives and artillery and excelled in topography, the art or practice of understanding natural and man-made features of a place or region. He used his skills to draw maps for DLBs (dead letter boxes) that ensured that cadres could locate hidden arms caches.

**On completion of the training he was sent to Mozambique.** With the reorganization of ANC structures that separated the political and the military, he was assigned to the MK Natal Urban Command. His commander, the late Mduduzi Guma who was also murdered at Matola, had recruited the late Judge Patrick Makhubela while he was working at Griffiths Mxenge Attorneys. Under Guma, Krish was stationed in Swaziland to receive and facilitate the return of cadres as well as to provide and support the supply of military equipment.

He took part in the training of members of the Makhubela and RPG units at the Miliwani game reserve. He also underwent further training from internal cadres to better understand the local physical terrain to prevent the detection, loss and deterioration of equipment. Krishna learned how to professionally doctor vehicles

and identify suitable locations that would preserve explosive, weapons and DLBs from negative weather conditions and make them more accessible to cadres.

Enemy agent infiltration by informers within the Natal Urban Unit led to the death of Krish and 11 others at Matola.

## **THE MATOLA RAID**

**On the morning of 30 January 1981 SADF commandos drove 70kms across the South African-Mozambican border to Matola,** a suburb in Maputo. The suburb contained a number of houses that served as safe houses or operational bases for MK. They attacked and destroyed three houses and killed 16 South Africans and a Portuguese national, Jose Ramos, who bore a striking resemblance to Joe Slovo. For brief period the SADF celebrated the death Slovo before news of the true identity of the Portuguese national emerged.

At one of the houses, the ANC fought back killing two commandos and injuring others. One of the commandos killed was a British mercenary named Robert Lewis Hutchinson who had served in the British Army and the Rhodesian Special Air Service before moving to South Africa. Hutchinson was wearing a helmet with a swastika and a slogan which read 'Sieg Heil', which was a Nazi salute. The other commando was Ian Suttill who shared a similar military background with Hutchinson.

The president of the ANC, Oliver Tambo, in the company of Mozambican president, Samora Machel, addressed mourners on 14 February 1981, at the funeral of those who were killed. As a result, the day was declared the **Day of Friendship between South African and Mozambique.**

**MATOLA RAID  
40 YEAR  
COMMEMORATIVE  
BROCHURE**

## **VISION OF THE KRISHNA RABILAL FOUNDATION**

The Krishna Rabilal foundation has been established to promote the values and principles advocated by Krishna Rabilal and other fallen heroes who were involved in the struggle for freedom, equality, non-racialism and non-sexism.

Armed with our KRF slogan: “Generations Inspiring Generations”, the focus of our work is targeted at youth mobilization and empowerment, and community based development projects.

The foundation aims to engage the community and especially the youth to aspire to the vision of Krishna Rabilal to bring about social and economic changes for our people.

The KRF hosts annual youth leadership workshops and entrepreneurial programs. The thrust of these initiatives is to inspire a critical consciousness and community awareness much like the ethos of Krishna Rabilal.

## **Launch of the Media Center at Merebank High School**

As Krishna Rabilal was a learner at the Merebank High School, The KRF has conceptualized the idea of the KRF Media Resource Centre at Merebank High School. The Media Centre is envisioned to be the central point with a learning environment to promote youth engagement

The main ideas for the Krishna Rabilal-Merebank High School Media centre are:

- ✓ *Resourcing the centre with computers and IT learning technology(smart board);*
- ✓ *Establish a reading collection of struggle and contemporary literature;*

- ✓ *Hosting of regular youth development programs such as seminars and workshops.*
- ✓ *Most importantly to respond to needs of youth within the prevailing socio-economic context such that the center is adaptable, responsive and youth focused.*
- ✓ *To be an organising and networking centre with the educational, CBOs, NGOs, Business and Local, Provincial and National Government sectors.*