



Chants of Freedom: Poems Written in Exile

By Mathews Phosa

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Mathews Phosa developed his love for poetry as a young boy growing up in rural Mpumalanga and Limpopo. While he has published a collection of poems in Afrikaans, *Chants of Freedom* is his first English poetry anthology. Mostly written while in exile as the commander of an MK unit in Maputo, Mozambique, Phosa's poems vividly recreate the feelings of anger, defiance, frustration, shame, pain and ultimately hope that characterized the exiles' experience of the struggle to abolish apartheid in South Africa.

Writing in a lyrical style, Phosa addresses such themes as oppression, violence, death and hatred, and recalls the atrocities and tragedies of the migrant-labor system, the murders of innocent children, the detentions without trial, the bannings and the state-sanctioned executions that characterized the apartheid era. *Chants of Freedom* provides raw, powerful and unprecedented insight into the consciousness of a freedom fighter.

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Chants of Freedom: Poems Written in Exile By Mathews Phosa Bibliography

- Rank: #6517704 in Books
- Published on: 2015-08-19
- Original language: English
- Dimensions: 8.00" h x 5.25" w x .25" l, .15 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 48 pages

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Editorial Review

About the Author

Dr Nakedi Mathews Phosa was born in Mbombela township, Nelspruit, but grew up with his grandfather in a rural area near Potgietersrus (Mokopane). He matriculated at Orhovelani High School in Thulamahashe and in 1981 opened a legal practice in Nelspruit. He left South Africa in 1985 and in 1986 became the regional commander of Umkhonto we Sizwe (MK), the military wing of the African National Congress (ANC), in Mozambique. Following the unbanning of the organisation in 1990, he was one of the first four members of the ANC to enter South Africa in order to start the process of negotiation with the National Party government. He played an important role in transition initiatives, including CODESA. As head of the ANC's legal department, he often engaged in fierce debates with the minister of law and order, Hernus Kriel, over issues such as the joint investigation by the South African Police and the ANC into the death of Chris Hani. After the first democratic elections in 1994, Phosa was appointed premier of Mpumalanga, a position he held until 1999. In 1995, the University of Boston in the US awarded him an honorary doctorate. He has been a member of the ANC's National Executive Committee since 1999 and at the ANC's 52nd National Conference in 2007 he was elected treasurer general, a position he held until 2012. Phosa speaks nine languages. In 1999 he published a volume of Afrikaans poetry called *Deur die oog van 'n naald* (Through the eye of a needle).

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