



**Hamba kahle comrade  
Mkhululi Khusta Sijora  
01.08.1982 – 29.05.2016**



# Rest in Protest

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Your spirit continues to stand on the struggle

[...]

You can kill the revolutionary not the revolution,

For the masses struggling there's only one solution;

Direct action, people's power, mass action;

Direct action, people's power, mass action

- *Soundz of the South*



Its not easy to write this tribute note, I didn't see this coming. No-one did.

I have spent almost everyday of the last six year with C'de Kusta building forces of resistance with Soundz of the South (SOS). Every week was the same as the last. Monday till Friday we would be at community House, protesting outside South African Parliament and come Monday and Wednesday we are in the field in high schools with ILRIG. In the evenings till mid night we would stay up writing and rehearsing new songs and plotting how to best intervene in struggle. Friday evening SOS meeting; Saturday we would go to different music shows and poetry sessions. On Sunday its Struggle, Hiphop 'n Poetry in Makhaza wetlands park an event C'de Khusta hosted. In all this, not a even a single day did he complain of feeling not well.

Cde khusta gave all his time and life to defend the working class and all oppressed people. He was particularly critical of all bosses and political parties; he argued that the people themselves have the will and the power to rule themselves.

He loved both of his daughters. We would be away travelling and he would talk about them. He made an effort to make sure that they were well and they knew that he loved them. He dedicated his only music album to uMbali.

The comrade will be missed for his energy in protests as was known for leading the songs. He will be missed for his abilities in resolving conflicts with the movement, for he perpetually focused in building the unity of all people in struggle.

...his efforts of building a free Africa with no borders with the Afrikan HipHop Caravan will not go unnoticed. Hiphop heads in Arusha, Tanzania know his lines about keeping a dream alive. Aluta continua his words will stay with me "keep it positive Qabane, positive positive positive all the way"

Cde kusta's untimely demise is a great loss. It will be felt by all those who were lucky to cross paths with him, all those who got to hear his music. In Brazil to Sweden, Zimbabwe to Kenya he will be dearly missed.



Kusta didn't separate his activism with his artistry. He was amongst the few artists that responded to the brutal murder of the Andries Tatane. He didn't hesitate to defend and demand justice for the Marikana mineworkers. He put all his weight behind the #FeesMustFall.

*Bagotywa besebatsha  
is what we use to say  
Apha baqotywa besebatsha  
babotshelwe ngechain  
Ugutyungelwe ngomthetho  
obaqweqwedisel' ejele  
Imfundo sisitixo  
kodwa bona kumele bebhatele  
Amatyala aqhekez' ingqondo  
ugqiba kwabo nje isgela  
Ngamakhobok' ebond  
aphilel ubhatal' ibank  
The Fees must fall free education  
Blade must go  
As we March united in the struggle  
taking the streets  
Like 76 we rise like they buried the  
seed  
So raise up your fist and say it with  
me fees must fall*

– Kusta's verse from the fees must fall song

In conclusion, there are many things that I would like to share about the

comrade. I have personally lost a friend and someone I relied on many things both politically and personally. The comrade was fun to be around with, approachable and humble.

Rest in Power Jola.

– Anele Selekwana

Khusta – the first memory that comes to my mind is a warrior on stage, clenched fist raised high up in the air. I was lucky enough to witness him perform many times in many places, including Cape Town, Johannesburg, Harare and Berlin. And each and every time his stage presence and poetic skills left me in awe: raw energy, pure excitement. For me, his performances gave true meaning to the word empowerment. In fact, when Khusta performed, I could feel that the power is ours. Amandla Ngawethu! I don't remember how many times I asked him to say these words, because, somehow, for me, he could make them come alive.

But it wasn't only me – he touched each and everyone in the audience. No matter if the space in front of the stage was crowded or not. And he also touched each and everyone he met off stage. One of Comrade Biko's lines comes to my mind, "From Berlin streets to the Chitown sections, we bring down walls and we build connections."

I met Khusta for the first time in 2013, not that long ago, in Cape Town. This meeting marked also the beginning of a journey that we embarked upon together – him as part of Soundz of the South, me as part of Uhuru Network – the Afrikan Hiphop Caravan. Thus, most times we met, we met in order to work. But this is not that surprising, since Khusta lived for his activism: planning, organising, travelling, networking, recording, performing.

Throughout the African Hiphop Caravan, we faced many situations

together-- some exhilarating and fun, others exhausting and difficult. Yet, no matter what, Khusta always stood strong, his presence always soothing. Indeed, I cannot remember that I once heard the comrade complain, no matter how many hours we spend on an uncomfortable bus or in lengthy meeting, or without food. On the contrary, Khusta remained calm and composed and if it was time to step to the mic, he delivered. Sometimes, when I felt really tired I would search him out, for a smoke or for a quick chat or just to be close to him, since being around Khusta lifted my mood and provided me with the energy to continue.

He did not judge people, he listened to them, and he met them with an open-mind, he had the patience to educate, to talk against ignorance – traits that turned him into a brilliant teacher and activist. I am happy that I had the chance to meet him. I struggle with the past tense of the previous paragraphs, as I struggle with his passing. I am not trying to make sense of his death, he left us too early, but I am trying to make sense of his life. All these beautiful, essential things that I have learned from working with him – I will always carry them within me. They urge me to be real to myself, to my friends and comrades, and to my community. My heart goes out to his family, Soundz of the South and everyone else who met and loved him. Let us never stop to celebrate his life.

**– Katja Kellerer**



Making a documentary, due to a number of factors, takes time and in that time one witnesses the story change, veering off the initial idea and become a narrative that writes itself. Over this time, one gets to meet people and know them intimately. The subjects give so much of themselves in the interviews, they retell painful stories, not in secret, but with a light shining at them, a camera in front of their faces, a mic that will record their stories and these stories, personal as they are, then get shared with a wider audience, laying bare the characters deep pains and insecurities.

Khusta, one of the main characters in the doccic I have been working on for over two years now, a man with a big heart, has passed away. I am saddened to express my eternal gratitude, both to his patience, dedication and his remarkable ability

to openly share his deep pains with me, exposing himself in ways a few of us have the courage to. I am yet to meet a man so strong, soldiering on against the odds, and yet so open, so honest with his deep feelings, so intellectual yet not hiding behind the façade of intellect to speak about what he is passionate about.

Perhaps, passed away is not the way we must think of it, rather that he has passed on, to inhabit another universe, that we must think of him, through his music, his stories, the interviews I did with him, in the times that you have interacted with him as a man who will always continue to be amongst us. So long Comrade, thank you for giving so much of yourself to the documentary and to the world and to those around you.

– **Lidudumalingani Mqombathi**



I got to know Khusta through three consecutive years of touring with the African Hip-hop Caravan.

I would see this brother for a roughly one month a year when he and I would put in the most miles together out of all the artists and organizers that collectively comprised the AHC.

We traveled by bus, plane, combi, taxi, dolla dollar and mutata through Johannesburg, Cape Town, Harare, Arusha and Nairobi.

We would walk some mornings or early afternoons. I would need a workout after consecutive nights of drinking, smoking, writing, recording, performing and

I would wake up after it was evident that the sun was high in the sky and I wasn't going to sleep any longer. For 2 years the location of our mid day walks took place in the beautiful setting of the UAACC outside of Arusha Tanzania. We were welcome here, it was a healing place to be amidst the struggle of pushing the collective dream of Pan African Unity and Liberation through Hip Hop. On one walk through the country side through small houses and farms on the way to a local stream Khusta shared with me the story of a right of passage he went through as a young Xhosa boy coming into manhood.

For at least two hours Khusta would share as I listened and asked questions and learned. What became clear to me in that moment was the depth of this man's character was not separate from his culture and that what he shared with me about who he was was not separate from who his people were. Starting with being Xhosa and a product of his mother and father's union and the ancestors before them, then being from Khayelitsha, being a Black South African from Cape Town and being an indigenous African and ultimately being an African, a Black Pan African Revolutionary who knew who he was.

Who Khusta chose to be in his rich Xhosa identity was a loving brother to all Africans he met. That is what is most remarkable about this man as I reflect on the many powerful aspects of his character and skills as an artist, organizer, revolutionary.

Khusta knew who he was and was able to put a degree of authenticity in his music, and interactions that I have seldom seen.

My comrade so enjoyed meeting and bonding with Africans from everywhere. Khusta was eager to share slang he had picked up from Africans who had migrated to South Africa from other countries. I witnessed Khusta bond immediately and enthusiastically with comrades from all over the continent on the basis of common vernacular that existed in different dialects. I sometimes envied this man's ability to quickly turn strangers into family. This is a testament to high revolutionary principles being a natural part of who he was as a human being. He studied the local Hip Hop folklore and lineage to the degree that he would surprise

some comrades with how much he knew about their local scene and the local artists who had made a name for themselves.

Working in the studio with this brother was always humbling and inspiring. To say he got better with every session is an understatement. You could feel the range of human experience in his lyricism and delivery. The intensity and the nuances of his vocal performances spoke to deep places within each of us, his comrades. At shows his presence was evident in the reaction and attentiveness of the audience. I will forever study his pitch shifts and use of singing, praise poetry, dancehall chatting and rhyming in Xhosa, English and Swahili. Returning home with new tracks that featured Khusta, I always felt as if I had the good fortune of witnessing greatness. His verses and choruses are immediately the favorite of my family and others who hear them.

There is a lot to say about this man. One of the most important things Khusta taught me was to think collectively as opposed to being self

centered. There would be times where in my hunger or thirst I was quick to bolt to satisfy my craving and Khusta was quick to firmly suggest that we all eat together, that we all leave at the same time, that I wait, the we should all wait for the comrade who was behind.

I literally reflect on all these things Khusta shared, gave, offered, exemplified daily. I would do so if he were still alive physically and I may do so more now that he has transcended.

I will miss him and I will know that he left so much of himself with all of us who knew him and loved him.

Power, Love and Respect to his family and community, to SOS.

**– Mic Crenshaw**



Khusta, our dear friend... Our teacher, and, as Ngcwalisa said a few days ago, the teacher of so many of us here today: “Khusta was wise.” And, indeed, Khusta was wise, not only because of the things he knew and shared with comrades and students near and far, and not only because, as Lidudumalingani wrote, he could express his intellect without hiding behind the façade of terminology, but also in the way he possessed his immense integrity and strength without ever parading it. He was calm and ever present, often quiet, but never unavailable for those who relied on him. And we did – in situations where we needed support and guidance as we were unsurely entering realms where our politics and hearts took us admittedly without all the necessary knowledge historically and linguistically speaking, he had our back and gave us the gift of his friendship.

He let so many of us here today to thus take shelter in a little corner of his great heart that was full of trust and faith in people; trust and faith that allowed him to keep his calm presence even when working with a lot of tension around him. And, more broadly, it was this trust and faith in people that kept him “soldiering on against all odds”, to borrow words from Lidudumalingani once again. If we had to point to the one thing for which we admired him the most, it would be this; the fact that despite the daunting challenges that he faced due to economic hardship and precarious employment, he never questioned or withdrew his commitment to the struggle for freedom and justice, for a world with less political, economic, and gender based oppression. And so, with his booming voice carrying the fighting spirit of his words far and wide, he steadfastly kept inspiring so many of us...

Remembering him as his friends for too short a time, we cannot imagine what it feels like for his family to lose such a giant person, such a special nephew and cousin, the irreplaceable father – our words fail to lessen the pain. And even for us, it is impossible for now to find comfort in the thought, and yet we trust that the legacy of his courage, wisdom, and love is here to stay and inspire the Freedom Warriors to follow.

Khusta, our dear friend, in these hearts your voice reverberates.

– Anna Selmeczi and Jessica Rucell

A Musician's Last Journey Ere the  
rosy morning brightens over  
Himmelmora's crest, See a dead man  
faring forth from Berga By: And silent  
o'er the hillside they bear him to his  
rest, Beneath the dawning grey, the  
chilly sky. And their boots go heavy-  
heeled through the rose-bespattered  
field, And heavy heads are bowed as  
tho' in prayer.

From the desert spaces' Need  
comes a Dreamer who is dead,  
Through dewy meads that shine with  
flowers fair. "He was strange and he  
was lonely," say the four dark bearing  
men, "And often lacked he resting  
place and bread." "Lo, a King!" say the  
roses and are trodden down again.  
"Lo, a King, and a Dreamer that is  
dead!" "We are slow," say the bearers,  
"and mile on mile it seems, Ever  
sultrier grows the day this morning  
tide." "Walk ye warily, speak softly,"  
sigh the willows by the streams,  
"Maybe it is some flow'ret that has  
died."

But when thro' green Spring  
woodlands the pitch-black coffin  
swings, Runs a silence through the  
morn-awakened fields, And the West  
Wind stays to listen who it is such  
escort brings, Mid the roses, with such  
footsteps heavy-heeled. "T'is but Olle,  
the musician," sigh the whispering  
forest trees, "For ended is his  
homeless day." "Oh, would I were a  
hurricane," replies the gentle breeze, "I  
would pipe him on his journey all the  
way!"

Over ling and yellow marshes sway  
the dead man's stiffening bones, Sway

wearily the sun's pale rays beneath:  
But when evening's lovely coolness  
falls on bilberries and stones Sounds  
the tramp again on Himmelmora  
Heath: Tramp of four tired men, who in  
grief march home again, With their  
heads bowed low as if in prayer.

But deep upon their track see the  
roses trampled back, Through the  
dewy meads that shine with flowers  
fair. "He is gone," say the bearers, "and  
his mother bides forlorn In Torberga  
behind the poorhouse bars." "We are  
trampled 'neath your footsteps, with  
your heavy shoes are torn," Cry the  
rose-buds, pointing to their scars

"It is Death that has gone dancing  
over Himmelmora Heath," Each thistle  
by the clover pasture moans: "He has  
ground you all to garbage his clumsy  
boots beneath, While he danced with  
the Dreamer's bones." O'er the grass  
and the grey roof-tops like a whisper  
comes the night, With her few pale  
stars' wretched fire: And East across  
the moor land to the tarn goes down a  
light, Goes a song through the lily-  
sprinkled mire.

Far and wide the black storm  
thunders, and round the islet there  
Chant the waves of the desert spaces'  
Need: O'er the dark and angry waters,  
lo, the night sounds call to prayer, For  
a Dreamer, a Musician, lies dead.

We are deeply saddened getting the word of Comrade Mkhululi Khusta Sijora leaving the world he always struggled to improve.

From the far south to the far north Comrade Khusta left no one untouched, and we truly share the grief and shock with his family, comrades and community.

We will always remember Comrade Khusta, and we will always remember the big guy with the big heart and the big smile.

*Över heden ifrån väster nedåt tjärnen går ett ljus,  
går en sång över näckrossållad dy.  
Och stormen sjunger svart och vitt  
och i skum kring Härnaön  
sjunga vågorna om ödemarkens nöd.  
Över svarta vreda vatten spelar natten upp till bön,  
ty en spelman och en drömmare är död.*

– Dan Andersson

A Luta Continua

– Niklas Skeppar



Phumla Qhawe Wenzile Kwabonakala.

Kudala ndisiva kusithiwa “isitya esihle asidleli” kodwa andizange ndayipha ngqondo intsingiselo yoku. Kwiminyaka endiyichithe noMkhululi sukela mhla sidibana eMakhaza kwaBongaz estudio, nakumaqonga ebesidibana kuwo sibonisa isakhono. uMkhululi wenza yonke into azibophelela kuyo, ngokuzinikela. Ubungqina bukwingoma athe wazibhala wazishicilela sukela mhla wenza umculo we Rap.

Litshantliziyo elikhethe ukusebenzisa umboko ukuvakalisa ukunganeliseki yindlela umnt’ omnyama asaphila ngayo kuzokufika ngoku ngelixa kuthiwa sikhululekile. Siphela sisebenzisana kumbutho uSoundz of the South, kuba imbono zethu zifana ngoba sonde sifuna ukusebenzisa izakhono zethu ukukhuthaza utshintsho ngokwabelana ngolwazi. Yonke lento siyenza ngenjongo zoshukumisa ulutsha lumanyane sikhangele indlela yokuphuhlisa intlalo silwe intswelanguqesho kunye nentlupheko ngaphandle kwemibutho yezopolitiko yona yohlula hlula abantu.

Sikwangabahlobo noMkhululi kunye namanye amalungu eSoundz of the South kuquka uAnele, Mawethu, Sabelo nongasekhoyo ulnfo nabanye abahlobo esithe sabongeza ekuhambeni kwexesha. Besinexesha lobuhlobo nelomsebenzi nangona nobobuhlobo bebujike bubengumsebenzi ngoba nencoko isoloko ingepolitiki nengcinezelo nokuba yeyiphi na indlela enokusisa enkululekweni.

Ndisazibuza ukuba ingaba luvakele na ukhwelo kulutsha? Ingakumbi abakhe banxibelelana noMkhululi lokuba “makungabingathi asikho, sikhona”. Unikele ngobomi kunye nexesha lakhe lonke edlulisa lomyalezo. Andikholelwa ukuba andisokuze ndiphinde ndimbone ngelenyama, kodwa ndiyazi ukuba umoya kunye negalelo lakhe kumzabalazo luyakuhlala lusikhuthaza. Kuluvuyo ukwazi Mkhululi Sijora kodwa akuzange kwabamnandi ukwahlukana ingakumbi xakusenzeka ngophanyazo. Thina sinoxanduva lukuthatha apho ushiye khona desilubone utshintsho. Phumla qhawe wenzile kwabonakala.

**– Ngumhlobo wakho uMonwabisi Solitude Dasi**



Huh I would write you a poem just to appreciate your life and your teachings but those lessons you gave us are worth more than that, it's just so sad to realize that we'll never see you again it feels like you gone to soon we haven't even gotten a chance to just say "thank you ta Khusta" and I know you'll give us that million dollar smile, never have I seen a man whose so down to earth, whose so easy to pour our hearts to, "ta khusta do you remember those days when we will fight with Anele you the when who set the fire out, now that you gone who will do that" ta khusta was truly a peace maker he knew the right words to use never has he he used hurtful words to the group, last year when you not around in the group we struggled without you God gave you the talent of keeping the people together even when I did not understand certain things I would ask you and you'd explain to me, it's still unbelievable that you gone forever, if you with God there tell him he has broken the world heart Cape Town was weeping for you yesterday did you see that I know you in heaven smiling down on us we will always love you ta Khusta.

**– By Athule**

Greetings Comrades. I pray that these few days have been a time well spent on good memories of Brother Khusta. May those memories help ease your grief and even bring a smile between tears. Please enjoy this video that brings a smile to my memories of Brother Khusta...in his element, among positive hip hop youth where ever he was in the world. Brother Khusta's example of commitment to uplift our communities through the arts and other wise, will always be reflected in our own good work! As he chants on stage in this video "...Toi Toi Hip Hop...Aluta Continua!" Yebo! May Brother Khusta rest well in the Realm of the Ancestors! Ase! Ase! AseO!  
[https://youtu.be/UJ2XOI-F\\_AA](https://youtu.be/UJ2XOI-F_AA)

**– Tribute from Mama C, former black panther**

I learnt a lot from this giant of the grassroots organisation within a very short space of time. When we were at the ILRIG April Conference, I had an opportunity to engage with him on critical issues, he had a lot to share with us especially on strategies to learn from the masses. A humble, good and emphatic listener who showed us how to give without expecting anything in return. May his soul and spirit keep on fighting even beyond grave. May he continue to beat the hell out of those who betrayed the Black Revolution even beyond death. Let the system that created conditions for his passing on at prime stage fall. Yes, a system that put profit before the lives of our people, a system of big business that he hated must fall. For the promise we made to each other, we will continue the fight with commitment and discipline and make sure that with our life a just and egalitarian society would be realised. Fight on Cde Khusta.

**– Thami Hukwe**

## **Message from OSISA Joburg**

The staff, colleagues and partners of OSISA join in our hearts, prayers and thoughts, with the comrades of Soundz of the South, and the friends and family of Mkhululi “Khusta” Sijora as we mourn his untimely passing.

We also stand in celebration of his brilliant, yet short life and his warrior spirit that touched so many.

## **Praise poem by Itai Zimunya:**

### **Mkhululi Khusta Sijora**

Power, power power to the people!

That’s a demand, a song, a dance!

Khusta is behind the Mic.

The crowd is waving, wanting more!

The hearts are melting to the lyric and Afro locks swinging to the beat...

Today, the voices remain loud in our ears!

The message stuck in our hearts! But Mkhululi is gone, gone with the wind!

Thanks for touching our hearts! Thanks for touching our souls!

Thanks for dancing to our spirit.

Yours remains a sweet melody! A powerful voice. Power to the people!

Hamba kahle Comrade.

Forever the song will play. Power to the people!

Khusta - go well Brother!

Always on our hearts!

Always with the wind, ‘til we meet again!

## **Tribute by Masego Masego**

### **Madzwamuse**

The SADC People’s Summit in 2014 had attracted over 2000 activists to the city of Bulawayo. One of the evenings we attended an event dubbed ‘Artists for Economic Justice’ which brought together poets, hip-hop artists and rappers from various parts of Zimbabwe

and the rest of the region. The music was great and what was striking was the extent to which the artists, young and old had one common message:

*‘Inequality must fall, poverty ought to be a thing of the past, where does the mineral wealth of the region go and in whose interests are policy makers making decisions on development...’*

There was one group that stood out. It was a two man act from South Africa. They had one message for the activists attending the People’s Summit. The message was Marikana must never be forgotten. In seeking regional solidarity the memory of the miners who had migrated to platinum hub in the North Western Province of South Africa should be kept alive. Their death, they said was a symbol of the injustices that the region grapples with – a rich region - poor people - and injustices that the poor continue to face at the hands of the state and mining companies.

Justice was and justice is for some. The duo, Mkhululi Khusta Sijora and Mawethu Gejies Mapotolo. together with M’Afrika Anele had travelled all the way from the Eastern Cape to Bulawayo by bus to deliver this message through the art of music - protest hip-hop, to be more precise. Their music and style was captivating and the message was driven home.

Once we were introduced to this youth group and realising their level of consciousness, there was no looking back. OSISA has continued to invite them as a key player in connecting with people in a meaningful ways and as a way of bringing the voice of the youth into critical spaces. Mkhululi was such a voice and he will be missed dearly. Sleep well fellow warrior; we salute you!



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