
Fighting for my country

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Introduction

There has been an outcry for the recognition of liberation fighters in post-apartheid South Africa. Their contribution to the struggle for political emancipation did not enrich the pages of history. Many such histories are trapped underground. Some stalwarts took it upon themselves to tell their own stories. Sandi Sijake is no exception in this regard. His memoir entitled *Fighting for my country: The Testimony of a Freedom Fighter* is a testament to his contribution to South Africa's liberation struggle. That is where his lived experiences and challenges find expression. The narratives in this memoir have accommodated other freedom fighters whose stories have not been told. Navigating through the episodes of his battles will put different layers of his struggles in proper perspective. Sijake's memoir provides first-hand accounts of his political life in South Africa from Apartheid to Democracy. It does not have an introductory note; it dives straight into chapters.

Analysis and Critique

The cover image is illustrious, and the title is inviting to the reading audience. His image on the cover page compliments the memoir. A summary on the back cover provides a brief background to his experiences on the political front. The memoir boasts twenty-nine chapters, which reflect the depth of his political journey. These segments of the political terrain he traversed make it much easier for the reader to capture the essence of his share

of the political struggle.

Chapter 1 touches mainly on his early life. He shares his childhood experiences and how he navigated the challenges thereof. The informal education he received from his parents and community elders helped him shape his outlook on life. Sejake's transition from informal to formal education enabled him to tap into the essential realities of life and politics through interaction with schoolmates and the knowledge gained from teachers. He also learnt about the limitations imposed on people who live in rural areas. The deprivations of rural life engendered a new political culture that dominated his psychological makeup as a young man.

Chapter 2 covers his introduction to politics. There was no free political activity in South Africa at the time. Political activists operated underground. The police were on a mission to purge black rural areas and townships of any form of political activism. He shares the support he received from his teachers, including the school principal. One gets a sense that Sejake exhibited some traits of a liberation fighter. He posed a threat to the apartheid regime. He had to hide from the police, who were pursuing him constantly. His political consciousness was informed by the implementation of the apartheid laws and their adverse effects, particularly on black people. There were competing perspectives among members of his community, including reverends and teachers. Some religious leaders supported the government system, claiming that God sanctioned it, while others expressed misgivings and rejected it outright.

Chapter 3 details how Sejake was introduced to the African National Congress and later joined it. That marked the beginning of his long journey of the liberation struggle. He drew inspiration from some political activists who were militant, radical, and unrelenting in their quest for emancipation from the shackles of apartheid. They were eager to go into exile and continued the fight against apartheid. In the subsequent chapters, he provides accounts of the highs and lows of his encounters while traversing the terrain of the liberation struggle. However, this memoir offers a narrative account of the author's experiences. It is written from an individual perspective. One of its downsides is that it cannot be used as a barometer to gauge the collective sentiments of the freedom fighters as it does not represent their views, sentiments, and aspirations.

Recommendations and Conclusion

The memoir by Sejake provides insightful accounts and sheds some light on the dynamics of the political struggle in South Africa. It is highly recommended to any reader seeking to

tap into the genesis of the fight for liberation, its periodic episodes, trials, and tribulations. Furthermore, the narratives in this memoir reveal many freedom fighters who are largely ignored in the mainstream accounts of South Africa's struggle against apartheid.

Finally, the memoir has been meticulously written and enjoyable to read. It is a constant reminder of the missing pieces of our democracy and the need to unearth the histories that remain trapped underground. That includes unsung heroes and heroines of the liberation struggle.