

## **Noluthando Agatha Mayende- Sibiya**

Born to activists parents on the 07<sup>th</sup> July 1956. Noluthando is the eldest of 3 children with a brother and a sister. The mother was a nurse and father a teacher.

Because of the political upheavals and the brutality of apartheid regime, the family fled into exile in Swaziland in the 1960's where Noluthando and her siblings did primary school education.

The family subsequently had to return to apartheid SA. Like millions of others in the country, the family suffered untold hardships under the brutality of the apartheid government through continued harassment by the security police. This was compounded by the fact that the younger brother left the country to join Umkhonto weSizwe, the military wing of African National Congress in Lusaka in 1982.

Noluthando attended high school at a boarding school in the rural area of Flagstaff in the Eastern Cape called Mfundisweni High School where she completed her matric. It was here, where she got involved in student struggles and activism even participating in strikes at the school.

Noluthando trained as a general nurse at McCord hospital in 1980-1983 and later did midwifery at the King Edward hospital 1984-1985. She was employed at Prince Mshiyeni Memorial hospital as a Professional Nurse in 1985, where her trade union activism began. She later joined Nehawu in 1988.

In 1990 Noluthando was elected a shop steward for the first time and led a strike that involved Edendale hospital in Pietermaritzburg as well as Ngwelezane

hospital in Empangeni. These hospitals shared the same problems as Prince Mshiyeni hospital in Durban under the then KwaZulu government.

Whilst Nehawu was a trade union addressing bread and butter issues of workers, it was also active in the fight against apartheid. Noluthando and many other workers survived several attacks and escaped death many times as they were at the leadership and forefront of the struggles of workers during that period particularly in the Kwazulu Natal province.

It was during the 1990's that Noluthando joined the ANC and later the South African Communist Party. Having participated in the activities and campaigns of the United Democratic Front in the 1980's, she also served as a member of the ANC Health Committee in KZN, later became its vice chairperson.

Noluthando was also a provincial gender coordinator in KZN from 1995-1998, participating in Cosatu and Alliance gender activities.

In 1998 she was elected as the 2<sup>nd</sup> Deputy President of Nehawu with area of focus being gender, political and organizational work and collective bargaining in the public service

In June 2004, Noluthando was elected as the President of Nehawu. She became the first woman to become president in the history of the trade Union movement in South Africa. In June 2007, Noluthando was re-elected as the President of Nehawu.

At the historic conference of the ANC in Polokwane in December 2007, she was elected into the National Executive Committee of the ANC. She also serves in the National Working Committee of the ANC.

She became a Member of Parliament and in May 2009, she was appointed the Minister for Women, Children and Persons with Disabilities.

Noluthando is a mother of three daughters. The eldest daughter is a medical doctor, the second is a lawyer and the youngest is an auditor.