

TUCOSWA TRIBUTE TO THE LATE JAN JABULANI S. SITHOLE

The carrier path of Jan Jabulani S. Sithole (known by his colleagues as JJ) started at the Usutu Pulp Company soon after he finished high school. His experience as a labour activist began during a disciplinary hearing in which he represented himself and won the case. This is when he started representing colleagues in labour issues in the same company.

He then went on to represent all workers within the agricultural belt and later all workers in the country. It was merely 5 years after the Proclamation of the notorious 1973 Decree that disbanded all Trade Unions except for the Bankers Union that Comrade JJ Sithole was assigned, together with other leaders to start unions in different sectors following the ILO Resolution in Swaziland.

Barely 2 years into the assignment JJ became one of the pioneers who fought for the enactment of the Employment Act. In 1982, the Trade Union Activities were again severely restricted. However, JJ never gave up but quietly continued building the Trade Union. It was the mid-1990s following the changes that had occurred in South Africa that his hard work was to come to the open with the activities of the SFTU. At that time he was the Secretary General of the SFTU, "the for-runner of the current Trade Union Congress of Swaziland - TUCOSWA" and he relentlessly fought for the rights of workers resulting in major industrial actions, the 27 demands and the formalization of the May Worker's Day holiday. He was a bold, unrelenting fighter for justice for all humanity at all costs even when he was met with violence. He was selfless, his passion for humanity was astounding. He believed in dialogue and he used it efficiently and effectively.

He then left the union and formed a political party SWADEPA, which was set to be a vehicle for moving forward all the other issues that could not be addressed properly through a Workers' Union. He also experienced detention for his trade union activities. In 2013, he contested for parliament and won as Manzini North MP and as a Political Party representative. Among other things, he was instrumental in challenging the notorious Suppression of Terrorism Act and to ensure that this act was amended in Parliament. His impact in society is undeniable. Throughout his life he achieved many milestones for workers, the union movement and the political sector.