

# DEVDASPAUL DAVID – AN ACTIVIST, A LEADER, A PEOPLE’S HERO!

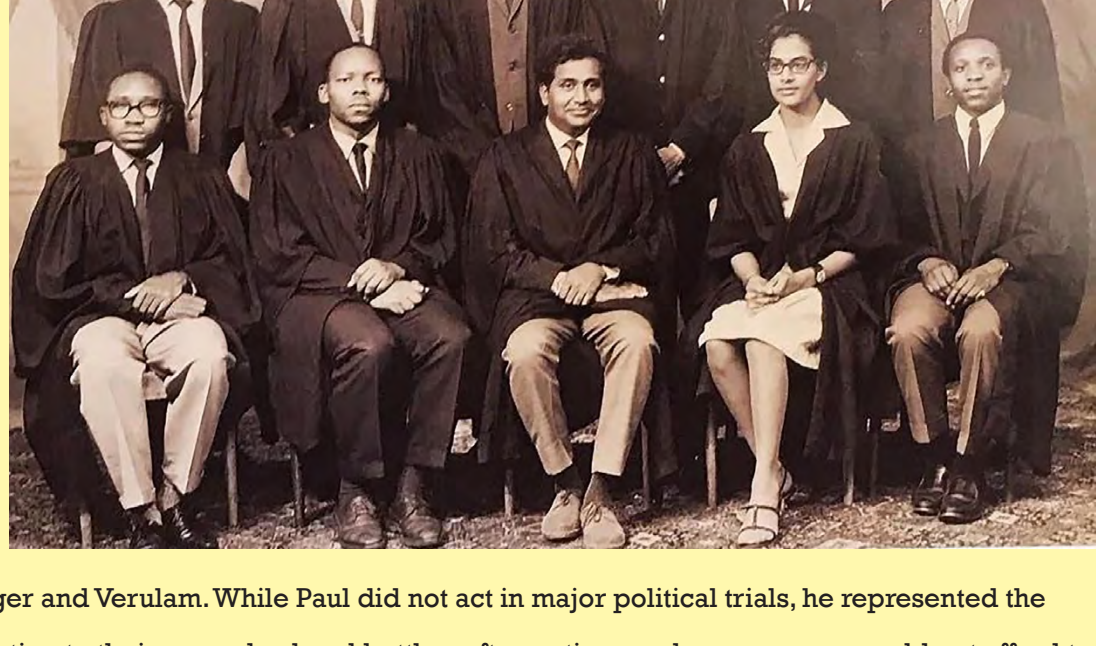


## Origins

Paul David's story starts, as with that of so many South Africans, with indenture. His grandparents arrived in South Africa as indentured labourers, eventually liberating themselves to rise to become leaders of the community through sheer hard work and education. His father Simon David was a school principal, and ensured that his children received the best education possible under the repressive colonial and apartheid regimes. Where the Davids stood out is that they deployed their education, talents and resources to the advancement of the cause of all South Africans. His siblings Phyllis Naidoo, Sinthie Oono; John and Ben David all played significant roles in our struggle for liberation.

## Student Activism

Paul was inducted into the world of politics, becoming the secretary of the Natal Indian Youth Congress while still in high school in 1959. This activism continued when he proceeded to the then University of Natal, where black students received their lectures in separate facilities. He served on the Students' Representative Council for this section along with Steve Biko, Rajes Pillay, Ben Ngubane and others.



## Attorney

Paul completed his law studies and articles of clerkship, and set up practice in Stanger and Verulam. While Paul did not act in major political trials, he represented the ordinary citizens in relation to their everyday legal battles, often acting pro bono as many could not afford to pay legal fees. Like many other 'struggle' lawyers, attorneys like Paul operated an unofficial legal aid system, to address the gaps in access to justice for poor people. Paul was a brilliant lawyer, who practiced law with compassion and generosity.

## Family man

Paul married the late Ursula Singh and they were parents to three remarkable young women – Jolene, Jasmine and Lisa. The David home was a sanctuary to scores of friends, activists and family members, and was the stop of choice of many especially on Christmas Day.



Paul on his exit from the British Consulate - just prior to his arrest

His family also bore the brunt of security police harassment and the travails of spells in detention as Paul's political involvement increased. Paul maintained contact with his sister Phyllis in exile. Despite the many risks involved, Paul continued to play a role in the ANC underground, often transporting and providing material support to its guerilla fighters.

Paul with his family at his 75th birthday party.



## NACOS



Paul with Mac Maharaj and Dharum Singh at a discussion on professional soccer under the auspices of the Federation.

Paul was one of the founding members of the Natal Council on Sport, a non-racial federation of sporting codes, formed in opposition to apartheid in sport, which was affiliated to the South African Council on Sports led by the late Hassan Howa. Himself an active sportsperson, Paul galvanised grassroots support to expose and frustrate the National Party's apartheid design in sport. He served in various capacities in organisations such as the Natal Cricket Board, the Southern Natal Soccer Board, as well as local sports bodies in Verulam and Stanger.

## Natal Indian Congress

Paul continued his activism through the Natal Indian Congress, revived in the early 1970s by Mewa Ramgobin, Ela Gandhi and other leaders. He was elected a vice-president at its 1979 conference, and continued to serve in this organization until the dawn of democracy.



The NIC Executive Committee convening in full for the first time in 14 years when banning orders expired - 1982.

In this period, he NIC transformed from a pressure group to an organization with strong grassroots, mass support.

## Natal Rates Committee and Durban Housing Action Committee

The issues of housing, community facilities and high rents and rates were close to Paul's heart. He actively threw himself into supporting community campaigns on these issues, and had no hesitation walking the streets making door-to-door visits to conscientise, mobilise and organise communities from Chatsworth to Stanger. His involvement, together with a host of activists and leaders, helped to develop strong community organisations in the greater Durban area and beyond, thereby challenging unjust, racist and discriminatory policies at local level. Paul was an expert in the law relating to rates, and challenged many local authorities in the region.

## Release Mandela Committee

As calls for the release of Nelson Mandela and all political prisoners grew, Paul was at the forefront of this movement, being instrumental in the formation of the Release Mandela Committee. He was elected as its secretary in 1983.

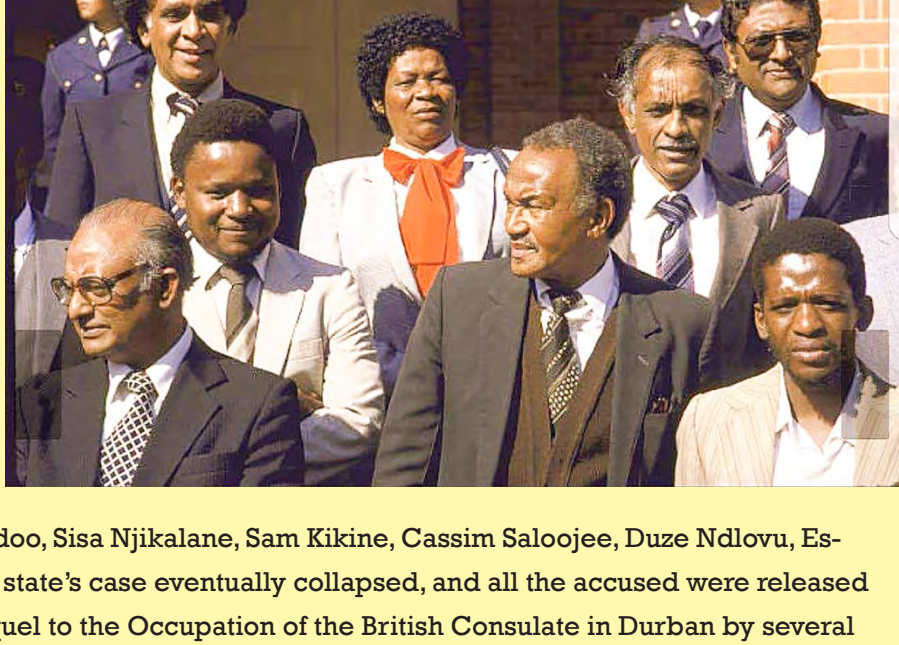
## United Democratic Front

By the early 1980s, the opposition to apartheid repression, and the proliferation of grassroots organisations had grown to an extent that made the launch of a national umbrella organization, the United Democratic Front, possible. Together with COSA-TU, community organisations, faith organisations and other local bodies, the UDF constituted the Mass Democratic Movement which led the final assault on the apartheid state. This forced FW de Klerk to unban the ANC, SACP, PAC and other organisations, release political prisoners, and begin the process of a negotiated settlement towards democracy.



## Harassment, Detentions

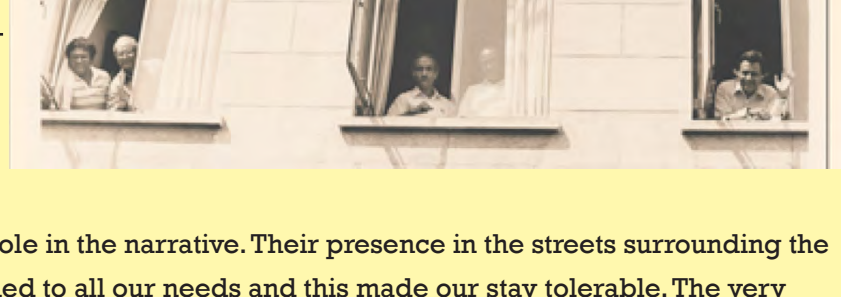
As with many leaders and scores of activists, Paul endured police harassment and detention. Through it all, Paul maintained his sanity, commitment and trademark humour. He was charged in the Treason Trial of 1985, along with leaders such as Albertina Sisulu, Aubrey Mokoena, Ismail Mahomed, Frank Mokoena, George Sewpershad, Mewa Ramgobin, MJ Naidoo, Sisa Njikalane, Sam Kikine, Cassim Saloojee, Duze Ndlovu, Essop Jassat and Thozamile Gqweta. The state's case eventually collapsed, and all the accused were released in December 1985. This trial was a sequel to the Occupation of the British Consulate in Durban by several UDF leaders, namely, Archie Gumede, George Sewpershad, Mewa Ramgobin, MJ Naidoo, Billy Nair and Paul David.



## The British Consulate Occupation

Paul was one of the six leaders who camped out in the Consulate, in order to bring to the attention of the world the apartheid government's repressive policies, particularly, detention without trial. Paul himself recorded the significance of this protest: "it emphasised the high moral ground which the liberation movement occupied. Our stay forced the hand of the apartheid regime to hastily put together a charge of High Treason which had no substance, merit or justification whatsoever."

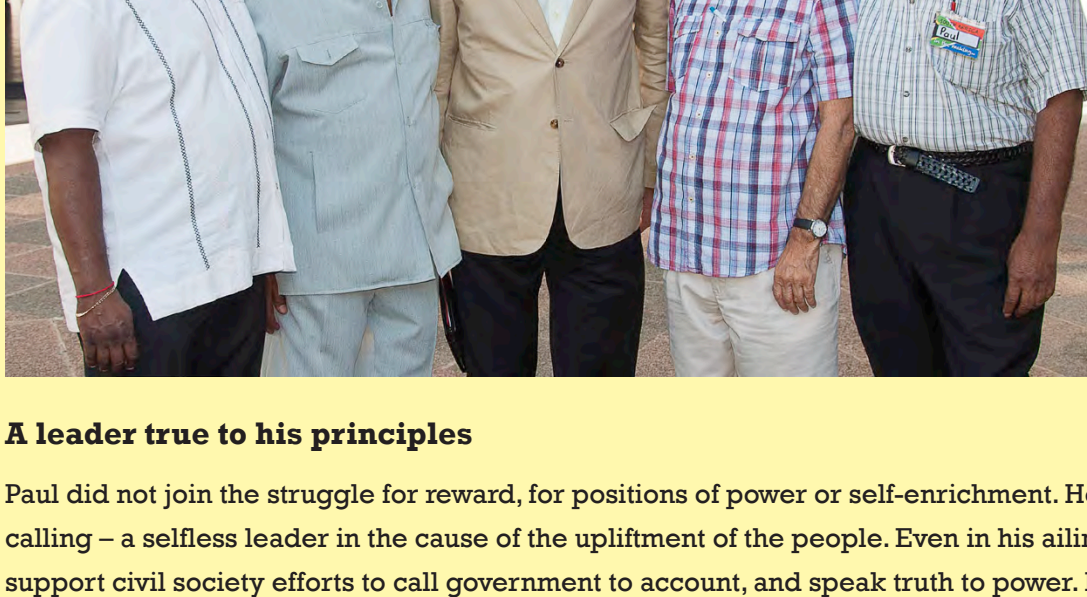
Paul, MJ Naidoo, Billy Nair, Archie Gumede and Mewa Ramgobin peer out of the British Consulate



Never one to boast about his own role in these momentous events, Paul was quick to acknowledge the role of others: "Without a mention of the role of young activists in the consulate saga would leave a huge hole in the narrative. Their presence in the streets surrounding the consulate was very reassuring. They attended to all our needs and this made our stay tolerable. The very idea of the occupation of the consulate emanated from an activists forum."

## Monty Naicker Commemoration Committee (MONACC)

In 2010 Paul initiated and was elected the founding Chair of the Monty Naicker Commemoration Committee to observe the centenary of the birth of Dr Monty Naicker, the President of the NIC.



Paul with Logie Naidoo, Swaminathan Gounden, Trevor Manuel & Farook Meer at a MONACC event.

Among the commemorative activities is an exhibition – South Africa in the Making, which captures the history of SA from the time of Union to 1994. The exhibition is still on display at the Moses Mabhida Stadium.

## A leader true to his principles

Paul did not join the struggle for reward, for positions of power or self-enrichment. He remained true to his calling – a selfless leader in the cause of the upliftment of the people. Even in his ailing days, he continued to support civil society efforts to call government to account, and speak truth to power. In one of his last public appearances at a rally against state capture organised by the Active Citizen's Movement, in November 2016, Paul spoke out against the theft public funds by politicians at the expense of the suffering masses in our country. That is how we remember Paul – never afraid to speak truth to power!

**Hamba Kahle Comrade!**

**Long Live Paul David!**