



JOINT STATEMENT: Trans Activist Leader, Lee Siba Mothibe, passes

31 March 2020 - It is with great sadness that we announce the untimely death of our beloved colleague, comrade and friend, Lee Siba Mothibe, who passed away on the morning of 30 March 2020. She was a fierce activist and sister to many in the LGBTQIA+ community and will be missed by everyone who knew her. She was an inspiration to many with the visibility she brought as a transgender woman in South Africa.

Born on 5 of August 1984, in the east of Johannesburg at Benoni Boksburg Hospital, Lee Siba spent most of her childhood in Vosloorus, Mankweng and Ga Mothiba in Polokwane. The rest of her years she lived in Daveyton, Gauteng.

In 2003 Lee Siba was crowned the first Miss Gay Daveyton. Lee Siba was one of the founders of Uthingo, which means The Rainbow, an LGBTIQ rights group located in Daveyton. Uthingo continues to support Mr and Miss Gay Daveyton which sought to uplift and empower many queer people, particularly trans womxn and masculine lesbians and non-binary persons. To Lee Siba gender expression was a deliberate act of challenging traditional norms on what constitutes male and female. She was intentional in forming Uthingo so that her larger community could be informed on the lived experiences of queer persons. The pageant was founded in 2003 and Lee Siba has since worked with throngs of contestants to make them pageant-ready; this was one of her many passions.

She served on the board of Gender Dynamix for the past three years where she was able to dedicate much of her time, experience and knowledge to serving the community as a leader. The Board of Gender Dynamix would like to extend their heartfelt gratitude to Lee Siba's family for sharing her with the organisation and community. To the organisation she was seen as exceptionally strong, caring, creative and resilient. Her voice and presence will be missed.

Lee Siba had been living with Kaposi's Sarcoma, a specific type of cancer, since 2017. In August last year, her right leg was amputated due to health complications which caused her to delay chemotherapy to treat her now advanced cancer until the leg amputation wound healed.

Her recent fundraiser brings to the fore the struggles trans persons are faced with when health care is not accessible, and the financial burden is shifted from the State. With greater care and greater resources, perhaps we could have had Lee Siba for longer in our lives. Lee Siba did not complain. She lived vibrantly whilst posting about her struggles in ways that gave us hope. She was a fighter to the end.

She is remembered as a daughter, sister, friend and comrade who was an example of strength and resilience. Her memory will continue to live on in our hearts and activist work. Many in the community came together to help Lee Siba in whatever way we could to make her last days



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easier. We now too can pull together to remember Lee Siba and the lives of so many of our fallen siblings.

The Uthingo group said “The community of Daveyton will miss you dearly for the amazing work you've been doing, more especially the LGBTQIA+ community. Rest in peace our sister. You've played a huge role in our lives and we've learned a lot from you. Rest She-roe”

On International Trans Day of Visibility, we dedicate this day to the Memory and Life of Lee Siba Mothibe. We salute you like soldiers' salute and bid farewell to a cadre. In this time of lockdown, we equally recognise how difficult it is for us to come together, we would all want to attend her funeral and sadly can't. COVID-19 has taken its toll on us and in this time.

The statement was issued together with Iranti, Gender Dynamix, Uthingo and Matimba.

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