



MIRRIAM "MAMA AFRICA" MAKEBA

1932-2008



## ABOUT MIRRIAM MAKEBA

Miriam Makeba was a remarkable musician, activist, and cultural icon whose career spanned over five decades. She was born on March 4, 1932, in Johannesburg, South Africa, and grew up in a world dominated by racial segregation and oppression. Her music and activism were deeply rooted in the struggles of her people against apartheid, and her legacy continues to inspire generations of musicians and activists around the world.

Makeba began her music career as a teenager, singing with the Manhattan Brothers, a popular South African vocal group, in the 1950s. She quickly gained recognition for her powerful vocals and vibrant stage presence, and soon began performing as a solo artist. In 1959, she recorded her first solo album, "Miriam Makeba," which included the hit single "Pata Pata," a song that would become one of her signature tunes.

However, Makeba's outspoken political views and activism against apartheid would soon lead to her exile from South Africa. In 1960, after she appeared in the anti-apartheid documentary "Come Back, Africa," the South African government revoked her passport and effectively banned her from returning to her home country.

Makeba spent the next 30 years of her life living and performing in various countries around the world, including the United States, Guinea, Belgium, and France. Despite her exile, she remained deeply connected to her South African roots and continued to use her music as a platform to raise awareness about the struggles of Black people and to advocate for racial justice and equality.



Throughout her career, Makeba sang songs in multiple languages, including English, Xhosa, Zulu, and Swahili. Her music was a vibrant mix of traditional African rhythms and Western-style pop music, and her lyrics often spoke of the challenges faced by marginalized communities in Africa and beyond. She sang about poverty, injustice, and the struggles of everyday life, but also celebrated the beauty and resilience of African culture and traditions.

In addition to her music, Makeba also used her celebrity status to support various social causes. She was a vocal supporter of the anti-apartheid movement and performed at numerous benefit concerts to raise awareness about the issue. She also supported the struggle for civil rights in the United States, and was an active participant in the Black Power movement of the 1960s.

ThMakeba's activism and music earned her numerous accolades throughout her career. In 1966, she became the first African artist to win a Grammy Award for her album "An Evening with Belafonte/Makeba," a collaboration with American singer Harry Belafonte. She also received the United Nations Dag Hammarskjöld Peace Prize in 1986, the Grammy Lifetime Achievement Award in 2005, and the National Order of the Legion of Honour from the French government in 2008.

Despite her many accomplishments, Makeba's life was not without its challenges. She faced numerous personal and professional setbacks throughout her career, including the death of her only daughter in 1985 and the cancellation of her concerts in the United States after she married Black Panther leader Stokely Carmichael in 1968.







Sadly, Makeba passed away on November 9, 2008, after suffering a heart attack while performing at a concert in Italy. However, her legacy continues to inspire generations of musicians and activists around the world. Her music and activism serve as a reminder of the power of art to inspire change and bring about a better world.

Miriam Makeba was a remarkable musician, activist, and cultural icon whose life and work had a profound impact on the world. She used her music as a platform to raise awareness about the struggles of Black people and to advocate for racial justice and equality, and her activism and advocacy continue to resonate with people.



# TIMELINE

## March 4, 1932

- Miriam Makeba is born in Johannesburg, South Africa.

## 1950

- 1950 Makeba joins the Manhattan Brothers, a popular South African jazz group.

## 1957

- Makeba appears in the documentary film "Come Back, Africa," which focuses on the struggles of black South Africans under apartheid.



## 1959

- Makeba moves to the United States and begins a successful international career as a singer and performer.

## 2021

- Makeba marries American civil rights activist and Black Panther Party member, Stokely Carmichael.



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**1960**

- Makeba marries American civil rights activist and Black Panther Party member, Stokely Carmichael.

**1963**

Makeba testifies against apartheid before the United Nations.

## **1965**

- Makeba becomes the first African artist to win a Grammy Award, for her album "An Evening with Belafonte/Makeba" with Harry Belafonte.

## **1966**

- Makeba's South African citizenship is revoked by the government due to her outspoken criticism of apartheid, effectively making her an international woman with no country.

## **1975**

- Makeba returns to live in Guinea, where she had been granted honorary citizenship in 1968.

## **1986**

- Makeba wins the Dag Hammarskjöld Peace Prize for her work against apartheid and for human rights.

## **1990**

- Nelson Mandela is released from prison after 27 years, and Makeba returns to South Africa for the first time in 31 years to perform at a concert celebrating his release.

## **2008**

- Makeba dies of a heart attack at the age of 76, just after a concert in Italy.



“Age is getting to know all the ways the world turns, so that if you cannot turn the world the way you want, you can at least get out of the way so you won't get run over.”

— Miriam Makeba

# Resources

- <https://www.sahistory.org.za/article/biography-miriam-makeba-narcy-negrete#:~:text=Miriam%20Makeba%20was%20a%20South,speeches%20at%20the%20United%20Nations.>
- [https://www.goodreads.com/author/quotes/893010.Miriam\\_Makeba](https://www.goodreads.com/author/quotes/893010.Miriam_Makeba)
- <https://www.theguardian.com/music/2008/nov/11/miriam-makeba-obituary>
- <https://theconversation.com/the-legacy-of-iconic-singer-miriam-makeba-and-her-art-of-activism-178230>
- <https://www.blackpast.org/global-african-history/makeba-miriam-1932-2008/>

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