

A freedom fighter's 'love for learning'

Freedom struggle hero, Saro Naicker, will launch her memoir, 'Love for Learning', on Wednesday, 12 February, at Goodwill Manor on Posy Place in Reservoir Hills at 6pm.

Now in her nineties, Naicker and her late husband, Marimuthu Pragalathan Naicker, spent various periods in prison and were forced into exile to England in 1967. Her grandmother was from the Magazine Barracks, which was destroyed by the apartheid Group Areas Act, forcing those families into areas like Chatsworth, Merebank, and Asherville. She remembers the barracks and its people with great fondness. In her book, she says: "My life, enriched so greatly by marriage to a true hero (MP Naicker), is a story that needs to be told so that succeeding generations could better understand the role women played in the struggle for social justice in a land where there was none." She added that her husband dared to dream a dream that would see all of South Africa's people occupying their rightful place under the warm South African sun and sky. She credits him for opening her eyes and mind and educating her politically.

Naicker said: "The role of a politician's wife should never be underestimated. Only a stable domestic home life, accompanied by the protection of children from the harsh realities of a cruel world, can be a true inspiration for a freedom fighter. My children, Suganya and Pren, and the rest of my family understood this and, through the shifting sands of time in my life, supported and encouraged me. My life as a little girl was stable, happy, carefree, and content. But this slowly and surely evaporated into an uncertain, risky, and often persecuted lifestyle." In spite of this, she never once wavered from her duty as a wife, daughter-in-



Saro Naicker with her sister Devi and author, Dr Gonam Raju in their younger days

law, mother, and child of South African soil for which she has no regrets. She says that the biography, meticulously prepared by Canadian academic Dr Gonam Raju, is not just a historical document; it is a message that clearly demonstrates how important the role of women is in political agendas. "Whether it be Winnie Mandela, Albertina Sisulu, Adelaide Tambo, or Graça Machel, the role of wife and mother is the cornerstone of any freedom struggle," Naicker added. She gave up the blanket security that surrounded her in her parents' home and embraced the uncertainty of her married life to a politician, which was only made easier because he was dedicated to his cause. Naicker said: "My isolation during his prison days and in exile was a small

sacrifice compared to the mental anguish that freedom fighters such as my husband suffered. A free and democratic South Africa, therefore, must be seen as a birthright." The book is published by Micromega in its 'Every Hero's Series', honouring the ordinary men and women who fought in the freedom struggle, worked in the factories, and volunteered in community organisations to uplift society. Commissioning editor of the book series, Kiru Naidoo, has called on people to come forward with manuscripts, memories, and photographs so that those stories can take their rightful place in history. For more info call 082-940-8163 or visit www.madeindurban.co.za. The book launch is open to the public.