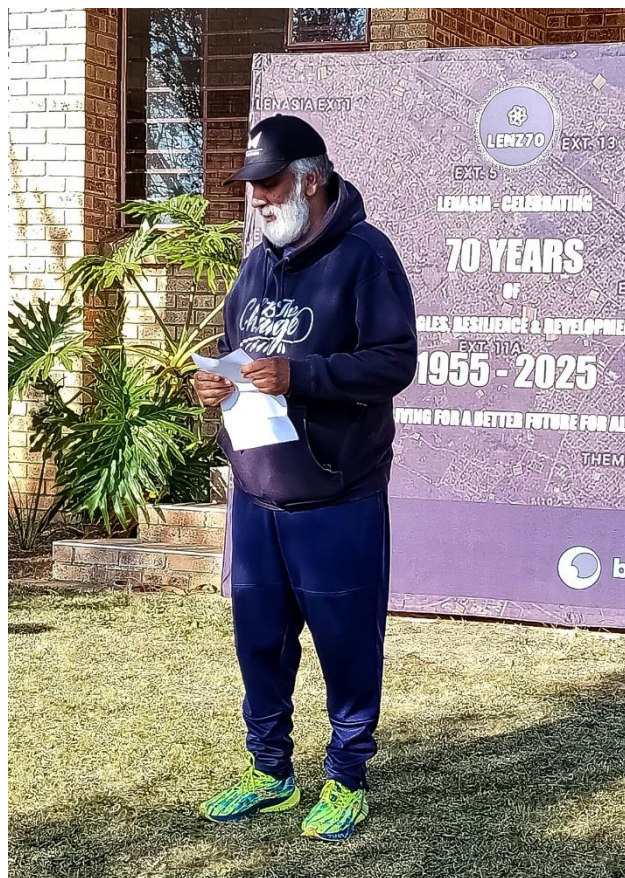


Seeds of Resistance, Harvest of Freedom
Tolstoy Farm, Johannesburg South
16 June 2026
(Neeshan Balton: CEO – Ahmed Kathrada Foundation)

Friends, we stand today on hallowed ground. Tolstoy Farm is not just a patch of earth; it is the laboratory where the spirit of defiance was refined. Here, between 1910 and 1913, Mahatma Gandhi and his companions cultivated the "Satyagraha" philosophy - the truth-force that would eventually rattle empires.



The 80th Anniversary of the 1946 Passive Resistance: The Seed of Non-Violence

Eighty years ago, in 1946, that seed of non-violence bore critical fruit. The 1946 Passive Resistance Campaign was a direct, disciplined response to the "Ghetto Act", which sought to confine the Indian community to segregated enclaves. Led by figures like Dr Yusuf Dadoo and Dr Monty Naicker, thousands of resisters chose the cold walls of a prison cell over submission to forced segregation.

This was more than a protest. It was a "training ground" that bridged the era of Gandhi with the mass mobilisation of the ANC. It proved that the monster of racism could be successfully confronted through collective, disciplined action.



At Umbilo Road in Durban the remembrance of the 1946 Passive resistance Campaign is being spearheaded by a dedicated group of former students from Sastri College, all of whom are now in their 80s and beyond. They are working tirelessly to convince the authorities in Durban to declare Resistance Park - the site that has come to symbolise the campaign - a formal heritage site. The Ahmed Kathrada Foundation will lend full support to this campaign, as it was this very movement that inspired a young Ahmed Kathrada to leave school and become a full-time activist.

The 1950s: The Wave of the People and the 70th Anniversary of the 1956 Women's March

That lesson of collective action was not lost on the next generation. Just ten years later, the resistance evolved from a localised campaign into a national wave that crashed against the Union Buildings. Today, we also mark the 70th anniversary of the historic 1956 Women's March.

On 9 August 1956, 20 000 women of all races marched to Pretoria to declare, "*Wathint' abafazi, wathint' imbokodo*", meaning "You strike a woman, you strike a rock". By refusing to carry dehumanising "passes", these women proved that the struggle was no longer just the domain of political elites - it was the bedrock of every household. Their courage remains the compass for our ongoing fight for gender equality today.

This year, as part of paying homage to the women of 1956, a campaign will be launched urging the Gauteng Provincial Government to finally open the Women's Living Heritage Monument. This museum has been completed but tragically remains closed to the public, despite reports that nearly R300 million was spent on its development. Opening its doors would serve as a powerful and fitting sign of respect to the 'Women of 1956'.

The Quiet 1960s and 70s: The Watershed Moment

The journey was never easy. The arrest and sentencing of Bram Fischer in 1966 signified the near defeat of the liberation movement within our borders. With prominent leaders either jailed or forced into exile, active opposition to apartheid fell quiet, and in many places, appeared entirely absent.

However, the release of the first Robben Island prisoners in 1973 and the historic Durban workers' strike showed that the embers of freedom were being re-lit. Yet, it would take another three years before opposition moved from quiet group discussions into a public wildfire that rang alarm bells across the world.

The 50th Anniversary of the 1976 Soweto Students' Uprising

Finally, we reach a monumental half-century milestone. It has been exactly 50 years since the 1976 Soweto Students' Uprising. This was the ultimate "watershed moment" where the torch of liberation was officially passed to the youth.

What began as a protest against the forced imposition of Afrikaans in schools became the final seal on the fate of apartheid. The "class of 1976" faced live bullets with nothing but schoolbags and placards, proving to the world that while a regime can kill a person, it can never extinguish the fire of freedom in a young heart.

The Legacy of Solidarity: Responding to Xenophobia Today

As we celebrate these milestones, we must confront a painful irony. While we gather to honour those who fought for dignity and inclusion, our nation is currently witnessing a surge in xenophobic mobilisation and divisive calls for the expulsion of

undocumented Africans. History teaches us that the freedom we enjoy today was never a solitary achievement.



- **A Sanctuary for All:** When Gandhi founded Tolstoy Farm, he did so on the principle of universal brotherhood, creating a space where people of different nationalities and backgrounds lived and resisted side by side.
- **The Debt of Freedom:** Our liberation was nurtured by the solidarity and active struggle of the African continent. During the 1976 Uprising and the decades of hardship that followed, countries like Tanzania, Zambia, Nigeria and Mozambique provided sanctuary, training and vital resources to our exiles.
- **A Common Enemy:** The 1946 Passive Resistance and the 1956 Women's March were movements aimed directly against a system that used "passes" and internal borders to divide and dehumanise us. To adopt those same tools of exclusion today through xenophobia is to betray the very essence of what Dadoo, Naicker, the women of 1956 and the youth of 1976 fought to dismantle. Xenophobia is merely a scapegoat for our own unresolved structural crises.

As President Ramaphosa recently urged, we must reject vigilantism and uphold the core values of Ubuntu and the rule of law. True patriotism lies in building a South Africa that is secure and lawful yet remains the laboratory of the spirit that Gandhi envisioned - a place where the dignity of every human being regardless of origin is sacrosanct.

Let the 80th, 70th and 50th anniversaries we mark today serve as a collective call to action: to choose solidarity over suspicion and to build a nation that is truly at home in Africa.

Conclusion

From the quiet discipline of Tolstoy Farm to the blood-stained streets of Soweto, the thread of our history remains unbroken. We are the proud inheritors of this resilience. Let us not just remember the past; let us actively recommit to a South Africa that is truly at home in Africa - secure, lawful and a place where the dignity of every human being is sacrosanct.

