

"Masotsha Sergeant Ndlovu: A Biography," in Henry Louis Gates, Jr. and Emmanuel K. Akyeampong, eds., *Dictionary of African Biography*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2011.

Ndlovu, Masotsha (1890-1982), pioneer trade unionist and nationalist politician in Southern Rhodesia, now Zimbabwe, was born on the eve of colonial rule in 1890 at Saba village, in the Thekwane area of Matabeleland. He was the first child of Nthoyiwa Ndlovu and his second wife, Bantema. Ndlovu spent his teens alternating between working in the fields, hunting and herding cattle. In 1910 he moved to the burgeoning city of Bulawayo, where he worked at Thomas Meikle Departmental Store as a 'post boy'. Realizing that limited education was a handicap in the industrial milieu prompted Ndlovu to migrate to South Africa in 1919 in pursuit of Western education. He settled in Cape Town where he worked and studied. He passed his standard six and proceeded to do an English course at matriculation level with the International Correspondence College.

Ndlovu's stint in South Africa sharpened his nationalist consciousness and trade union interests through exposure to the literature and activities of organizations that championed African rights to land, better wages and housing. These included the African National Congress (ANC), the South African Communist Party (SACP), the Industrial and Commercial Workers' Union (ICU) and the pioneer African newspaper, *Imvo Zabantsundu*, owned and founded by John T. Jabavu in 1884. Ndlovu also drew insights from Marcus Garvey and Dr. James E. Kwegyir Aggrey's pan-African writings and speeches. Inspiration from these diverse strands of thought and activism made Ndlovu eager to confront colonial oppression back home in Southern Rhodesia, where his trade union organizing and political activism were to be noted for their multiethnic and national outlook.

In 1927, while Ndlovu was still in South Africa, the ICU sent Robert Sambo to establish a branch in Southern Rhodesia. The move failed because colonial authorities deported Sambo as an undesirable "native alien." In January 1928, Ndlovu returned to Bulawayo where he swiftly immersed himself in the struggles to rectify daily challenges that urban based Africans confronted such as paltry wages, forced labor, discriminatory legislation such as the Masters and Servants Act, overcrowding and poor medical and sanitary facilities in their residential areas known in colonial parlance as "locations" or "townships." Ndlovu teamed up with Thomas