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## Wilfred Mhanda

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**Wilfred Mhanda** whose nom de guerre during the [Second Chimurenga](#) was Dzinashé Machingura was born on 26 May 1950 and he died on 28 May 2014. He was a politician who later turned out to be one of the numerous commanders within the [Zimbabwe African National Liberation Army](#) (ZANLA). He was dubbed as one of Robert Mugabe's nemesis during the liberation struggle and in the post independence era until the time of his death. He formed his Zimbabwe Liberator's Platform which criticised [Robert Mugabe](#) and his [Zimbabwe African National Union Patriotic Front](#) (ZANU PF) led government after the 2000 [Third Chimurenga](#). He published his book titled *Dzino: Memories of a Freedom Fighter* in 2011 which was termed as a self serving narrative in which Mhanda was criticised for portraying himself as unblemished. It was deemed unfit to confer a hero status to him though he had fought tenaciously for the purported freedom of Zimbabweans from the [Ian Smith](#)'s regime.

Wilfred Mhanda



Born

Wilfred Mhanda

Died

(1950-05-26) May 26, 1950

Nationality

May 28, 2014 (2014-05-28) (aged 64)

Education

Zimbabwe

Occupation

Technical University of Berlin

# Pindula

- Politician.

Political party

[Zimbabwe African National Union Patriotic Front](#)

## Political career

Mhanda grew up adoring African leaders such as Nkwame Nkrumah, Sekou Toure as well as other African liberation heroes as early as 1961 when he was 11 mainly because his father was a keen African nationalist.<sup>[1]</sup> This was one of the reasons which influenced him to join the ZANU PF. Apart from this, Mhanda also stated that he was initiated into politics after his schooling was affected by the arrest of his teachers by the Rhodesian Security Offices.<sup>[1]</sup> In 1969, Mhanda was one of the few youths who organised a demonstration against the [Unilateral Declaration of Independence](#) announced in 1965 as well as the Land Tenure Act.<sup>[1]</sup>

In 1970, when he was doing his Advanced Level, Mhanda was always in trouble with the police. Although Mhanda was actively engaging himself in political activities, he stated that he was not aligned to any political party prior to 1971. He joined ZANU PF in 1971 when he was enrolled at the then University of Rhodesia, present day [University of Zimbabwe](#) (UZ) where he was doing his BSc in Chemistry, Zoology and Botany.<sup>[1]</sup> Whilst at the UZ, he formed a ten member cell whose aim was to secretly recruit students to join ZANU PF. The cell was instrumental in slipping students from the country to either Botswana and Zambia under the disguise of the Southern Christian Movement holiday trips.<sup>[1]</sup> He was however arrested in May 1971.

After his release, he went to China to receive military training. He was ordained to be a military instructor and a political commissar in Tanzania.<sup>[2]</sup> In 1975, he was later selected amongst the few to receive an advanced three months military training in China.<sup>[1]</sup> Upon his return he was incorporated into the [High Command](#).<sup>[2]</sup> In 1976 when the Zimbabwe People's Army (ZIPA) was formed, he was second in command in ZANLA and this subsequently meant that he was to be third in command. Mhanda stated that he was petitioned by Mugabe to be part of the ZANU PF's delegation during the Geneva Conference of 1976. He however refused to attend the conference arguing that he wanted to do so under the banner of a patriotic front composing of both ZANU PF and ZAPU members.<sup>[1]</sup> He further explained that he was already being detested by Mugabe's autocratic tendencies and was regretting why he together with other commanders of ZIPA had persuaded Samora Machel the then president of Mozambique to recognise Mugabe as the president of ZANU PF.<sup>[3]</sup> He was the commander of the vashandi movement which was a counter-revolutionary element of ZIPA dubbed as *zviganada*.<sup>[4]</sup>

After the conference, he was arrested by Machel together with other fifty ZANLA commanders and six hundred guerrillas on the basis that they were now questioning Mugabe's leadership skill.<sup>[1]</sup> No charges were laid upon the arrested and they were never brought on trail. The arrested were detained in Mozambique, living under squalid conditions and Julius Nyerere who was the then president of Tanzania petitioned Machel to at least relax the conditions in which Mhanda and company were subjected under.<sup>[1]</sup> Their release was part of the independence deal brokered during the [Lancaster House Agreement](#)

# Pindula

## Career in the Post-Independence Era

Mhanda joined ZAPU and he explained that his decision was influenced by the fact that Mugabe had worked with considerable success to block his re-integration into the *old guard*, that is ZANU PF.<sup>[1]</sup>

In 1981, he got a scholarship to study in the then West Germany as it was known before the fall of the Berlin Wall which saw the unification of West and East Germany into Germany. He did an MSc in chemical biotechnology at the Technical University of Berlin.<sup>[1]</sup> After completing his studies, the institution offered him a job to be a lecturer. Mhanda argued that the Zimbabwean intelligence working for Mugabe told the Germany government that he was a communist and upon such a revelation which according to Mhanda was not true, the University of Berlin withdrew the job offer.<sup>[1]</sup> Mhanda relocated to France in the hope of settling well but alas this was not the case. He opined that Mugabe was on a relentless campaign to blacklist him all because of a personal vendetta which had earlier saw the arrest of Mhanda by Machael.

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In 1988, Mhanda returned back home but no one was willing to employ him because he was blacklisted. In the wake of the Third Chimurenga which has been demonised, Mhanda formed the Zimbabwe Liberator's Platform which was mainly composed of ex-combatants who were opposing the Mugabe led regime.<sup>[5]</sup> He was now exposing himself publicly as Mugabe's nemesis on the basis that he was betraying the principles of the liberation struggle as well as the trust of those who authored the Mgagao Declaration which saw the deposition of [Ndabaningi Sithole](#) as the president of ZANU PF elevating Mugabe to be the president of the party.

Before his death, the Zimbabwe Liberator's Platform was no longer comprised of ex-combatants but those who were not contended with the ZANU PF led government, ranging from business people, students and the civil servants.<sup>[4]</sup>

## Controversial Book

In 2011, Mhanda launched his book titled *Dzino: Memories of a Freedom Fighter* which has been referred to as a self serving narrative which failed to genuinely illuminate what happened during the Second Chimurenga. In his book, Mhanda portrayed Mugabe as an opportunist whose rise to power was advanced by certain people.<sup>[6]</sup> [Josiah Tongogara](#) was also portrayed as ruthless and in Mhanda's view he was not fit to lead Zimbabwe after independence because of his demeanour.<sup>[6]</sup> Instead [Herbert Chitepo](#) was the ideal candidate but he however died in 1975.

Mhanda was criticised for stating that he was the one who initiated the creation of Wampoa College. The creation of Wampoa was however the brain child of David Todhlana who is also believed to have derived

# Pindula

the name as well as the inspiration of the college's creation after witnessing the success of such a school in Russia when he was receiving military training.<sup>[6]</sup>

Mhanda also dismissed the view that [Emmerson Mnangagwa](#) played a significant role during the liberation struggle. He argued that he was merely Mugabe's personal body guard and secretary.<sup>[3]</sup> Mnangagwa was however credited for engaging in sabotage activities under ZANU PF before the war broke out. This according to Mhanda was trivial as contrasted to the activities of those who fought on the war front. Coincidentally the night when Mhanda was launching his book, [Solomon Mujuru](#) who was his colleague during the liberation struggle was being engulfed in flames when fire broke out at his home in Beatrice and he died instantly.<sup>[4]</sup>

## His Death

Mhanda succumbed to colon cancer. Before the disease was diagnosed, he had gone to South Africa seeking medical attention as his heart was troubling him.<sup>[6]</sup> The doctors reported that the cancer was cleared after he had undergone chemotherapy for six months.<sup>[6]</sup> It was reported that his stomach and legs were swelling at unprecedented levels and this was attributed to fluids injected in his body as a result of the chemotherapy treatment.<sup>[6]</sup> He was buried at the Glen Forest Cemetery, being denied a hero status. [Rugare Gumbo](#) stated that it was unlikely that he was to be conferred hero status despite playing a leading role in the Second Chimurenga liberation war especially because after independence he became one of Mugabe's critics.<sup>[7]</sup> His brother stated that when Mhanda was buried, his kidney, liver and intestines were missing and this caused a stir amongst the deceased relatives.<sup>[8]</sup>

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# Pindula

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