

## Who are heroes?

ONE difficult question before Namibians is who is to be called a Namibian hero?

This question was once debated on a programme called 'Counter Point' in 1992, and people were also given the chance to air their views on a radio chat show.

Some names were mentioned of those considered to be heroes, like Chiefs Hendrik Witbooi, Mandume Ndemufao, King Nehale Mpingana, Jacob Marenga, some mentioned Frankie Fredericks and others asked whether German Governor Leutwein should be a hero, or President Sam Nujoma?

As far as I am concerned this question still needs an answer.

Before this issue was debated I had already some interest in the topic and was trying to gather information for an education poster on heroes of Namibia, which is still pending, as the question remains unresolved.

As a historian I was asked to identify Namibian heroes, and the aim of the poster is to help or guide teachers at schools as to how they could include this topic in their syllabus.

Generally a hero is a person distinguished by his or her extraordinary courage or strength.

In my opinion Namibian heroes are those who fought courageously and died for Namibia to be free of foreign domination as well as some who are still alive and contributing to the wellbeing of our country.

Some argue that heroes are just heroes to a certain ethnic or racial group, but what matters is what such people brought to Namibia as a whole.

Hendrik Witbooi in the south opposed any kind of foreign rule and wrote letters to other chiefs asking them to fight against the foreign



power. He did not only oppose the Germans subduing his own people but was against their presence as dominators of the Namibian people. Chief Samuel Maharero made efforts to bring Namas and Rehobothers to join the uprising in the German-Herero war. The Namas did join and Chief Maharero's call to other chiefs was an important step in a united national campaign to regain Namibia's independence. In the north King Nehale Mpingana immediately joined the war of national resistance when he received the message from Chief Maharero. In the process, they attacked the German fort at Namutoni, and until his death Nehale refused to pay compensation for the attack.

Another who fought courageously against a foreign power was Chief Mandume Ndemufao. He made a law to keep the peace with other Namibian communities but fought the Portuguese in order to keep the independence of his people.

Namibian heroes can be characterised according to the periods they lived in. The few just mentioned are among those who courageously fought against the German colonisers.

Many heroes could also be found in the period between 1940 and 1980. A few include Tobias Heinyeko, the first commander of Plan, Swapo's military wing, who died a heroic death on a boat while fighting an enemy unit on the Zambezi river; Greenwell Simasiku Matongo, Plan Chief Political Commissar, who died in a landmine explosion in 1980.

The event of 10 December cannot be left unmentioned. On this day Namibians died resisting colonial occupation.

I appeal to Namibians to come up and put more



international campaign to regain Namibia's independence. In the north King Nehale Mpingana immediately joined the war of national resistance when he received the message from Chief Maharero. In the process, they attacked the German fort at Namutoni, and until his death Nehale refused to pay compensation for the attack.

Another who fought courageously against a foreign power was Chief Mandume Ndemufao. He made a law to keep the peace with other Namibian communities but fought the Portuguese in order to keep the independence of his people.


Namibian heroes can be characterised according to the periods they lived in. The few just mentioned are among those who courageously fought against the German colonisers.

Many heroes could also be found in the period between 1940 and 1980. A few include Tobias Heinyeko, the first commander of Plan, Swapo's military wing, who died a heroic death on a boat while fighting an enemy unit on the Zambezi river; Greenwell Simasiku Matongo, Plan Chief Political Commissar, who died in a landmine explosion in 1980.

The event of 10 December cannot be left unmentioned. On this day Namibians died resisting colonial occupation.

I appeal to Namibians to come up and put more efforts into honouring their heroes. I specifically ask the new municipalities to look into it and make sure that at least the new streets in our country are named after our heroes. I per-





---

sonally would be happy to see the status of Leutwein replaced by a statue of Witbooi.

ELINA NUJOMA  
WINDHOEK

## **Gender awareness**

TODAY (March 4) I opened my Namibian in order to get the latest news. What do I find, a third of the page plastered with some beauty contestants. This