

Blue State Blues: The Radical Black Feminist Who Became a Trump Supporter

[Joel B. Pollak](#) 8 Apr 2022



6:49

Rhoda Kadalie is a black feminist who was active in the struggle against apartheid, served in President Nelson Mandela's administration on South Africa's Human Rights Commission, and worked with George Soros to fund development projects in poor communities.

Now living in Los Angeles (she is my mother-in-law), Rhoda was also an early supporter of President Donald Trump, and remains so today. Her journey holds lessons for a nation still wrestling with race and democracy.

Born in 1953 in Cape Town's diverse District Six (later to be destroyed by the apartheid regime), Rhoda grew up classified as "Coloured," or mixed-race. Her grandfather had been Clements Kadalie, a Malawian migrant who was the first black trade unionist in South Africa.

Her father was a musician-turned-pastor who moved the family to the suburb of Mowbray to run the city's public laundry. But the area was declared "white," and all of its black families were evicted in the early 1970s.

Rhoda attended the University of the Western Cape, a segregated campus devoted to the Coloured population. Inspired by writer Steve Biko and his philosophy of Black Consciousness, students were beginning to protest against apartheid and to reject distinctions among its "non-white" victims.

Rhoda began speaking out for the role of women, who were overlooked and even abused by male leaders in the movement. As a faculty member, she later set up the campus's [Gender Equity Unit](#). As a result of her efforts, women at the university won benefits such as equal pay, maternity leave, and protections from sexual harassment.

Rhoda also participated in discussions about the inclusion of women's rights in South Africa's new constitution. Her efforts gained nationwide attention, and following the first multi-racial democratic elections in 1994, she was appointed by Mandela to the Human Rights

Commission. She became its most active member and most recognized public face.



Rhoda Kadalie and Nelson Mandela at the University of the Western Cape, Cape Town, South Africa, 1990s (Courtesy Rhoda Kadalie)

Rhoda demanded that South Africa live up to the standards of its new democratic order. Having studied at The Hague in the 1980s with women from around the world who were activists in their own country's liberation struggles, she knew that post-colonial governments were prone to corruption and institutional failure. When the ruling African National Congress (ANC) began to falter in its commitment to human rights, she resigned her position in protest, urging Mandela to adopt reforms.

She then launched Impumelelo, an organization that supported

successful private-public partnerships in poor communities. With funding from Soros and other donors, she also created a database of best practices she hoped the government would use to expand upon local successes.

At the same time, Rhoda began writing regular columns in local newspapers, often excoriating the government for its growing corruption — and, increasingly, its exploitation of race.

While she supported affirmative action and the idea of redistribution, known as “black economic empowerment,” Rhoda opposed those policies when they meant lowering standards, or giving big deals to “disadvantaged” ruling party insiders.

When Mandela’s successor, Thabo Mbeki, embraced racist conspiracy theories about HIV/Aids and backed Zimbabwean dictator Robert Mugabe in his anti-white fulminations, Rhoda was among the first South Africans to speak out in protest.

She remained a member of the ANC, but criticized it from within, and supported the opposition Democratic Alliance (DA) during several elections — although she was also critical of the DA, too, especially its hurried promotion of black leaders to counter the party’s “white” image.

Rhoda rejected political correctness, and was at her sharpest when criticizing the South African media, academia, and corporate leaders for their acquiescence in what we would now call “woke” racial ideology.

Rhoda eventually [broke](#) with Soros, and also spoke out in defense of Israel, defying the pro-Palestinian consensus on the left and speaking

out against the antisemitism that often crept into anti-Israel activism. She infuriated her critics, but earned a wide base of readers and fans.

A close observer of American politics, Rhoda was skeptical of the rise of Barack Obama, seeing him as largely an empty shell. When then-Sen. Obama (D-IL) visited Cape Town and delivered a speech, she declined to attend, on principle. Few foresaw, as she did, that his presidency would end in disappointment.

Conversely, Rhoda took an interest in Donald Trump, seeing him as a *skollie* — a “ruffian,” in South African slang — who would shake up a complacent American establishment.



Courtesy Rhoda Kadalie

Trump was not the only candidate who impressed Rhoda. She enjoyed watching Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-VT) take aim at Hillary Clinton, and cheered when businesswoman Carly Fiorina confronted Trump over his past rhetoric about women.

Today, Rhoda continues to argue for a more open American political debate, one less constrained by the same rules of political correctness and identity politics she believes have prevented South African democracy from achieving its potential.

The chaos of the 2020 election left her disillusioned about American democracy, but she sees hope in the ongoing anti-“woke” backlash.

A committed Christian, Rhoda has also spoken out throughout her life for gay and lesbian rights. She has always been pro-choice, though she also opposes partial-birth abortion and has spoken out against the extremism of Planned Parenthood.

Rhoda has a unique ability to embrace political contradictions. Her approach to democracy is pragmatic, not ideological: she favors a diversity of views, even ones she dislikes, because it gives citizens the most leverage to hold politicians accountable.

Her remarkable journey teaches that a true love of liberty transcends the categories that often confine our political thinking.

Joel B. Pollak is Senior Editor-at-Large at Breitbart News and the host of Breitbart News Sunday on Sirius XM Patriot on Sunday evenings from 7 p.m. to 10 p.m. ET (4 p.m. to 7 p.m. PT). He is the author of the forthcoming biography, Rhoda: Comrade Kadalie, You Are Out of Order!. [RED NOVEMBER](#), tells the story of the 2020 Democratic presidential primary from a conservative perspective. He is a winner of