

Brazilian samba singer Elza Soares dies at 91



Brazilian singer Elza Soares attends a parade in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, on February 25, 2020. 'Racism still continues, but we are going to fight it and we will make progress,' Elza Soares said last year.

Rio de Janeiro, January 21 (RHC)-- Elza Soares, a celebrated Brazilian samba music singer who campaigned against racism, died at her home in Rio de Janeiro on Thursday, her family said. She was 91.

The singer “moved the world with her voice, her strength and her determination”, Soares’s family members said on her official Instagram account, adding she “will forever be in the history of music and in our hearts and the thousands of fans around the world”.

Born in a favela community in Rio de Janeiro to a washerwoman and a factory worker in 1930, Soares rose from poverty to record 36 albums and perform at the 2016 Olympic opening ceremony in Rio.

Her raspy voice struck a chord with audiences worldwide in concert hall performances of songs that touched on the hardship of life in the Brazilian city, justice for women and racism in the South American nation.

She became a fierce champion of Black feminism and an outspoken voice against violence against women.

"Racism still continues, but we are going to fight it and we will make progress. Racism is a sickness," Soares told the Reuters news agency in an interview last year.

In 1966, Soares married soccer star Mane Garrincha, a striker who helped Brazil win the 1958 and 1962 World Cups along with the legendary Pele. Their tumultuous 17-year relationship ended when Soares left Garrincha after he struck her during an argument. He died of cirrhosis in 1983. She died on the same day 39 years later.

Former Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva paid tribute to Soares in a Twitter post on Thursday. "We lost not only one of the best singers and most powerful voices in Brazil, but also a great woman, who has always defended democracy and good causes."

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