



AL3301 - The Glenda Webster Collection

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Abstract: This collection consists of an essay entitled 'David Webster: A fearless defence of legality and due process?' by Glenda Webster. The essay, drawing on material from Glenda Webster's personal collection (not lodged with SAHA), records her experiences of David Webster's contribution to the work of the Detainees' Parents' Support Committee (DPSC), an organisation established in October 1981 to oppose and expose detention without trial in particular and repressive human rights violations in general.

Introduction

Glenda Webster was married to David Webster from 25 January 1969 until 5 December 1988. They both grew up in Luanshya in Zambia, attending the same class at Luanshya Primary School in 1957. They met again in 1964 as first year students when David was at the University of the Witwatersrand and Glenda at Rhodes University. David joined Glenda at Rhodes the following year where they both completed their studies, Glenda a B Com with UED and David a BA Honours in Social Anthropology.

After they got married in 1969 they went to Mozambique where David embarked on fieldwork for his PhD, living for a year amongst the vaChopi in the chiefdom of Sammuson Mcumbi. This would prove a watershed moment in both their lives.

They returned to East London, South Africa where David worked as a sub-editor on the Daily Dispatch, and Glenda as a clerk. In 1971 they moved to Cape Town and then Johannesburg. David obtained a post as junior lecturer in the Wits Anthropology Department, while Glenda worked as a high school teacher. In 1973 she started working as a course writer for the then Barclays Bank (now FNB). This was to start her professional career in two fields: writing and editing for publication, and writing training for young professionals. This was followed by a move into journalism with Management Magazine and the Financial Mail in 1975. In the same year David was awarded his PhD, supervised by Professor David Hammond-Tooke, from Rhodes University.

June 1976 proved another watershed moment for the Webster's. The Soweto uprising happened at a time when David was about to leave on his first sabbatical year at Manchester University in England. He spent two years in Manchester while Glenda had to return home not being able to find work. After David's return in 1978 they moved into the Crown Mines community of 'the white left'. This would prove a third watershed moment for it was during this time that several people were detained and incarcerated without trial, many of which they knew personally. They both became involved in detainee support work.



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David Webster became one of the founder members of the Detainees' Parents' Support Committee (DPSC). A founder member of the Detainee Support Committee (DESCOM), Glenda Webster joined the Black Sash in 1983 and was appointed magazine editor at the start of the first State of Emergency in May 1985. She remained editor until the Black Sash National Committee moved to Cape Town at the end of 1986. During that time she worked at SACHED Trust as a course writer. David Webster was assassinated on 1 May 1989 outside his home in Troyeville, Johannesburg.

Regarding her tribute to David as a "defender of legality and due process" Glenda Webster says:

"From my experience I believe that David's involvement in the DPSC gave him a role in struggle against apartheid that was most meaningful to him. It suited his values and his personality. After he was killed I received many letters of consolation. One came from Prof Etienne Mureinik who was the Dean of the Law School at Wits University where I was working as tutor at the time. He described David as a "fearless defender of legality and due process". In my opinion, it was the best and most meaningful attribute I had received about David."

Glenda Webster's essay "David Webster: A fearless defence of legality and due process?" seeks to explore the validity of Prof Mureinik's perception of David's contribution.

This introduction is based on information provided by the donor.

Acronyms

ANC - African National Congress
BLA - Black Local Authorities Act 102 of 1983
CCB - Civil Cooperation Bureau
DA - Democratic Alliance
DESCOM - Detainees' Support Committee
DPSC - Detainees' Parents' Support Committee
GLA - General Laws Amendment Act 62 of 1966
JMC - Joint Management Council
JSC - Judicial Services Commission
PFP - Progressive Federal Party
SADF - South African Defence Force
TRC - Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa
UDF - United Democratic Front

Inventory

A: Essay

A01: David Webster: A fearless defence of legality and due process?

[2015 - Access copy - PDF, Preservation copy - PDF/A]

This is an essay entitled "David Webster: A fearless defence of legality and due process?" written by Glenda Webster in 2015 as a tribute to David Webster. After the assassination of David Webster on 1 May 1989, his former wife Glenda Webster received a letter of condolence from Professor Mureinik describing David as 'a fearless defender of values, such as legality and due process'. This essay seeks to explore the validity of Professor Mureinik's perception of David's contribution to the work of the DPSC.