



AL3119 - The Sheila Meintjies and Beth Goldblatt Collection

Call Number: AL3119
Title: The Sheila Meintjies and Beth Goldblatt Collection
SubTitle:
Creator: Unknown
Origination: TRC Archive Project
Inclusive Dates: 1995-1997
Bulk Dates:
Extent: 0.1 linear metre (1 archival box) containing 1 file
Language: English
Acquisition: Accession Number: 04-011
Access Restrictions: This collection is open for research
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Abstract: In March 1996, the Centre for Applied Legal Studies (CALs) at the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits), convened a workshop entitled "Gender and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission". The result of the workshop was an in-depth submission to the TRC, which warned that by adopting a gender-neutral attitude the Commission would be falling prey to a basic flaw in the truth-finding process, by accepting the premise that abuse and violations of human rights can be gender-neutral. The TRC took this critique seriously and agreed to CALs' proposal for special women's hearings which were subsequently held in Cape Town, Durban and Johannesburg. Two researchers who helped spearhead this particular discourse are Beth Goldblatt, a researcher in the CALs Gender Research Project, and Sheila Meintjies, a lecturer in Political Studies at Wits. Together they prepared a second submission on the situation of women. Meintjies presented the submission at the special hearing on women.

Introduction

As the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) was constituted in terms of a provision of the Interim Constitution of 1993, there were concerns that the Commission would adopt a gender-neutral position in its enquiry into the occurrence of gross human rights violations in accordance with the principle of equality as entrenched in the Constitution.

This would mean that specific forms of oppression and repression that were directed at women, or could only be directed at women with the desired effect, would not be recognized, and that in consequence a highly skewed and incomplete picture of the gross human rights violations would emerge from this approach.

Therefore in March 1996, immediately prior to the TRC commencing its operations, the Centre for Applied Legal Studies (CALs) at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg convened a workshop entitled 'Gender and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission'.

The participants were women from all walks of life.

The result of the workshop was an in-depth submission to the TRC, which warned, that by adopting a gender-neutral attitude, the Commission would be falling prey to a basic flaw in the truth-finding process, namely that accepting the premise that abuse and violations of human rights can be gender-neutral.

The TRC took this critique seriously and agreed to CALs' proposal for special women's hearings which were subsequently held in Cape Town, Durban and Johannesburg. Prior to the special hearings on women, the TRC also organized two workshops with women's groups and the representatives of the media to brainstorm ways and methods of bringing women into the TRC process.

The two researchers who spearheaded this particular discourse, and put 'gender' squarely onto the agenda of the TRC are Beth Goldblatt, a researcher in the CALs Gender Research Project, and Sheila Meintjies, a lecturer in Political Studies at the University of the Witwatersrand.



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Together they prepared a second submission on the situation of women. Meintjies presented the submission at the special hearing on women.

Their publications which form part of the collection document the research conducted for the compilation of the submission to the TRC.

Related Materials

The collection can also be accessed online at <http://truth.wvl.wits.ac.za/>

A guide to archival resources relating to South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission can also be found at: http://truth.wvl.wits.ac.za/trc_directory.pdf

The following collections resulted from the TRC Archival Audit:

- AL3021: Sooka, Yasmin
- AL3059: Dealing with the Past (Conference of Protestant Academy of Bad Boll, Germany)
- AL3060: The State vs. P.W. Botha and Appeal
- AL3061: Auditor General Reports on the Accounts of the TRC.
- AL3062: Office of the Public Protector, Synopsis of Cases regarding Complaints involving the TRC
- AL3063: Documents relating to the TRC Special Hearings on Health
- AL3066: Materials Relating To TRC Faith Hearings
- AL3068: Harris, Verne
- AL3100: Submission to the TRC concerning Relevance of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights to the Commissions Mandate
- AL3101: Jamiatul Ulama Transvaal, TRC Submission
- AL3102: Amnesty International TRC Materials
- AL3103: Institute for Healing Memories (IHOM) TRC Materials
- AL3110: Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation (CSV)
- AL3115: Argall, Jane
- AL3116: Cherry, Janet
- AL3118: Marcus, Gilbert
- AL3119: Sheila Meintjies and Beth Goldblatt
- AL3120: Ross, Fiona
- AL3121: Julian Knight and Rudolph Jansen
- AL3125: The Challenge of Reconciliation: A Response of Church and Lay Persons to the TRC
- AL3126: Confession and Reconciliation: A Challenge to Churches in South Africa
- AL3128: Terreblanche, Christelle
- AL3129: Zapiro TRC Collection
- AL3130: African National Congress (ANC) TRC Materials
- AL3131: Cosatu Submission to the TRC
- AL3132: Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) Submission to the TRC
- AL3134: Iphepha Ndaba Newsletters from the Western Cape
- AL3135: Fester, Gertrude
- AL3136: Villa-Vicencio, Charles
- AL3137: Behr, Mark



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AL3141: Human Rights Watch Materials

AL3142: NGO Working Committee on Reparations Materials

AL3143: IDASA Sound Recordings Relating to the TRC

Notes

Included in this collection: Summary of the panel discussion "Does Truth have a Gender? A women's perspective of the TRC", Minutes of the Workshop: "Gender and the TRC", Register of workshop participants, Workshop paper by Jessie Duarte, Press release by TRC entitled "Special Hearings on Women", Submission to TRC prepared by Goldblatt and Meintjies, transcript of hearing relating to submission presented by Meintjies, and papers relating to the issue of Gender and the TRC.

Materials collected from TRC Archival Audit.

The TRC Archival Audit

Between 2003 and 2006, SAHA and Historical Papers, University of Witwatersrand embarked on a project to locate, retrieve and make available records relating to the South African Truth and Reconciliation Committee (TRC). The project entailed conducting an archival audit of all existing TRC records in order to identify and locate documentation in danger of being lost.

In the process of conducting the archival audit, SAHA and HP located many collections from individuals and organizations that participated in the TRC process, including this collection. Selections from these materials as well as TRC related material found in the freedom of Information Collection and other pre-existing SAHA and HP collections, were digitized and can be accessed online at <http://truth.wvl.wits.ac.za/>

A guide to archival resources relating to South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission can also be found at http://www.saha.org.za/pdf/trc_directory.pdf

Classification

- 1: Summary of panel discussion: 'Does Truth have a Gender? A Women's Perspective of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission' March 1996
- 2: Documents relating to the 'Gender and the TRC' workshop held 19 March 1996
- 3: Press release by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) regarding special hearings for women
- 4: Submissions: 'Gender and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission'
- 5: Various papers and articles relating to the issue of Gender and the TRC

Inventory

- 1: International Human Rights Day Activity
 - 1.1: International Human Rights Day Activity. Summary of the panel discussion: 'Does truth have a gender? A women's perspective of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission', 1995
[1995]
- 2: Workshop: 'Gender and the TRC'
 - 2.1: Minutes of the workshop: 'Gender and the TRC', 19 March 1996
[19 March 1996]



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- 2.2: Register of participants, identifying their names, contact details as well as the organisations they represent, March 1996
[March 1996]
- 2.3: Paper presented at workshop by Jessie Duarte, 19 March 1996
[19 March 1996]
- 3: Press release
 - 3.1: Press release issued by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission entitled 'Special Hearings for Women', 15 August 1996
[15 August 1996]
- 4: Submissions to the TRC
 - 4.1: Gender and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. A submission to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission prepared by Beth Goldblatt and Sheila Meintjies'. Appendix: List of interview informants, May 1996
[May 1996]
 - 4.2: Human Rights Violations Women's Hearing. Transcript of hearing relating to the submission presented by Dr Sheila Meintjies of the Centre of Applied Legal Studies (CALs) of the University of the Witwatersrand, 29 July 1997
[29 July 1997]
- 5: Papers and articles relating to the issue of Gender and the TRC
 - 5.1: 'Violence, Gender and Human Rights - an Examination of South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation'. A paper presented to the Law and Society Association Meeting in St Louis, Missouri by Beth Goldblatt, 29 May 1997
[29 May 1997]
 - 5.2: 'Dealing with the aftermath: sexual violence and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission'. An article published in AGENDA, Issue 36, written by Beth Goldblatt and Sheila Meintjies, 1997
[1997]
 - 5.3: 'South African Women Demand the Truth'. Chapter by Beth Goldblatt and Sheila Meintjies from Meredith Turshen and Clothilde Twagiramarija (eds.): What Women do in Wartime: Gender and Conflict in Africa. London: Zed Books, 1998
[1998]