

135 Letters

INTRODUCTION

The collection consists of letters written by Helen Joseph to Joan McLagen and her husband Philip during the Apartheid era in South Africa, covering the years between 1962 and 1992. Helen Joseph was a major human rights defender and anti-Apartheid opponent for more than 40 years.

The letters tell of Helen Joseph's experience in the fight against Apartheid, and her life in general during that period in South Africa. The correspondence between her and Joan and Philip commenced shortly after Helen was placed under the house arrest in 1962. The McLagen family provided financial assistance to victims of Apartheid and their families. Through this correspondence they developed a warm and lasting friendship.

Joan and her husband Philip McLagen were the key figures in mobilizing the anti-Apartheid movement in Victoria, Australia during the decades spanning 1962-1992. The anti-Apartheid campaign in Australia was supported not only by the State of Victoria but also joined by the other regions of Australia. Helen Joseph became a central point of contact, enabling members of the Amnesty International organisation in Australia to help victims of Apartheid in South Africa.

The letters were donated to the Historical Papers Archive by Leslie Futeran from Sydney, Australia in 2013. She used to live in South Africa during the period of 1931-1978.

Reference is made to the collection A1985 Helen Joseph Papers.

COLLECTION

- A1 1962
Letter from Helen Joseph to Joan McLagen dated 18th of November 1962 about Helen being banned.
- A2 1963
Letters addressed to Joan and her husband Philip written between May and December 1963. Helen talks there about her friends kept in detention without a trial, house arrests, her own court case, sentence and appeal, trials of people charged for sabotage, her contacts with Australian donors and organizations as well as help to the banished families. .
- A3 1964
Letters covering period of January to December 1964 containing information on the Rivonia Trial and a gratitude of Helen Joseph for financial help to the banned activists and their families.
- A4 1965
Letters for 1965 (January-December) describing appreciation to Joan and Philip for sending money and parcels to the families in South Africa affected by banishments.
- A5 1966
Letters from Helen to Joan thanking her for money donations to women struggling to survive without husbands punished by banishment, 1966 (January-December).
- A6 1967
Correspondence between Joan and Helen for 1967 (February- December) discussing Helen's book publication and articles in the newspapers reporting on banning.

- A7 1968
Letters for (January- October) 1968 in which Helen talks about money donations from Australia, her personal readings and studying as well as her women friends ('political widows') struggling to survive on their own after arrests of their husbands.
- A8 1969
Letters to Joan (January- October) 1969, thanking her for the Christmas presents which she had donated to African women.
- A9 1970-1971
Helen's Joseph letters for 1970 and 1971 (January-November) relating to her operation followed by the radiation therapy and recovery.
- A10 1972
Letters of (January-December) 1972 thanking Joan for the Christmas gifts and cards send to Helen who distributed them to African women and children whose husbands were in jail.
- A11 1973-1976
Correspondence covering period of 1973- 1976 discussing Helen's daily life, her studies, health problems (heart condition), providing funding for school fees for the children of banished parents.
- A12 1977
Correspondence for the year of 1977. It includes letters of a deportee Laynas Mashile addressed to Helen Joseph and Helen Suzman, asking them to present his case of unlawful arrest and jailed without a trial in Parliament before the Minister of Bantu Administration.
- A13 1978
Letters of (January-December) 1978. They contain information on some events in Helen Joseph's life, such as her addressing mass meetings at various institutions in Cape Town, Durban, Pietermaritzburg and Bloemfontein.
- A14 1979
Helen Joseph's letters for the period of (January – December) 1979 relating to issues of education of the families' children whom Helen was supporting financially, her health problems including hospitalization and gratitude to Joan for the money donations.
- A15 1980
Letters of 1980, in which Helen Joseph is thanking Joan for the gifts sent to Helen, discussing family matters and the educational progress of Mashile's children at school.
- A16 1981
1981 letters (March, September and November) about Helen's recovery after her accident of breaking her leg and working on her project for a publication.
- A17 1982
Letters of April and May 1982 where Helen brings up matters of her banning order as well as the one of some of her friends.
- A18 1983
Letter dated 15th of November 1983 in which Helen is talking about her leg operation and her recovery.
- A19 1984
Letters of March and November 1984, bringing up issues of Helens progress in recovery and also about losing her dog.
- A20 1985
A letter written by Helen Joseph in February 1985 in which she talks about the gathering organized by the United Democratic Front (UDF) in Soweto, and her plans to address students in Cape Town.
- A21 1986

Letters for 1986 in which Helen is describing to Joan the political situation in South Africa in 1986, schools, consumers, rent and transport boycotts, as well as Helens speeches at several public meetings in Cape Town, Natal and in Johannesburg in demand for the release of political prisoners.

A22 1987

Helen's letters to Joan for 1987 discussing the undemocratic elections in South Africa and protests against them by students, school children and workers, as well as the life of some activists released from prison. Further about Helen's stay in hospitals in Cape Town and Johannesburg because of her heart problems.

A23 1989-1991

Single letters for 1989, 1990 and 1991 where Helen describes her come back to the political platform by speaking at the public gatherings in Free State, Cape Province, Johannesburg, Rhodes University and the University of the Witwatersrand. Also describing the release of many political leaders from jail and their reunion with their families.

A24 1992

Letters for January and November of 1992 in which Helen is talking about the ANC's 80th birthday bash in Bloemfontein, her being awarded with the ANC medal for an outstanding and heroic service to the people of South Africa, and Helen's speech therapy after her mild stroke.