



**HELEN JOSEPH MEMORIAL LECTURE
PROGRAMME 10 AUGUST 2011**

FACULTY OF HUMANITIES

**RETHINK EDUCATION.
REINVENT YOURSELF.**



18:00 Opening and welcome

Prof Angina Parekh
Deputy Vice-Chancellor Academic

Introduction

Prof Rory Ryan
Executive Dean: Faculty of Humanities

Introduction of keynote speaker

Prof Leila Patel
Director: Centre for Social Development in Africa

Keynote address

Gary Barker, PhD,
International Director,
Instituto Promundo,
Rio de Janeiro, Brazil and Washington, DC, USA

Topic: Men and Gender Equality: Between the
Urgency and the Confusion

Vote of thanks

Prof Tina Uys
Chairperson: Department of Sociology
Director: Centre for Sociological Research
Vice-President (National Associations) ISA

19:30 Cocktail

Programme for the
Helen Joseph Memorial Lecture
10 August 2011

Helen Joseph 1905 - 1992

For forty years Helen Joseph dedicated herself single-mindedly to opposing apartheid. Her commitment earned her the ANC's highest award, the Isitwalandwe/Seaparankoe Medal. It also led to a relentless government campaign to silence her – a campaign which ultimately failed. For generations of South Africans, Helen was an inspiration and a symbol of defiance, integrity and courage.

Helen Beatrice May Fennell was born in Sussex, England, in 1905. She graduated from King's College, University of London, in 1927, taught for three years in India, then came to South Africa in 1931, where she met and married Billie Joseph. Her service as an information and welfare officer in the Women's Auxiliary Air Force during the Second World War, and her subsequent decision to become a social worker, exposed her to some of the realities of South African life.

In 1951 Helen took a job with the militant Garment Workers Union, led by Solly Sachs. Sachs had a profound influence on Helen - from him she learnt her politics. Through him she came to see the true face of apartheid - the physical and psychological oppression of people not classified white. She joined the political fray, not as an ideologue, but as one moved to great anger by the injustices she witnessed. Helen was a founder member of the ANC's white ally, the Congress of Democrats, and in 1955 was one of the leaders who read out the clauses of the Freedom Charter at the Congress of the People, Kliptown.

Helen was appalled by the double oppression of black women, and was a pivotal figure in the formation of the Federation of South African Women. The 9th August 1956 was one of the most important moments of her illustrious political career, when together with Lilian Ngoyi, Rahima Moosa and Sophie de Bruyn, she spearheaded a march of about 20,000 women to Pretoria's Union Buildings to protest against the pass laws. The 9th of August has since then been commemorated as Women's Day.

Arrested on a charge of high treason in December 1956, and banned in 1957, Helen's life became a long saga of police persecution. She endured, and survived, threats, bullets shot through her bedroom window late at night, even a bomb wired to her front gate. Her last banning order was lifted when she was in her 80th year. Helen used every opportunity, each brief respite from her restrictions, to keep talking, to bear witness, to address meetings.

She wrote three books: *If THIS Be Treason*; *Tomorrow's Sun*, in which she documented her 8,000 mile search for people banished to remote regions; and her autobiography, *Side by Side*. Helen showed that what a dictatorial and corrupt regime fears most is not force and firing power, but the witness of people of dignity and integrity.

Helen, South Africa would very much have wanted to share with you the triumph of the struggle to which you dedicated your life.

Source: South African History Online