

Ruth Weiss and SA liberation politics on exhibition in Cape Town

One of the lesser-known anti-apartheid activists, Ruth Weiss, will launch her exhibition 'My Very First Question to You: An acoustic portrait of journalist Ruth Weiss and southern African liberation politics' in Cape Town from 7 September 2014 until 31 October 2014 at the Jewish Museum.

It will feature a sound installation with compositions from her interview archive and five selected interview clips made during this era. Weiss' recordings - used for reference for her newspaper articles - offer an intimate, unfiltered opportunity to hear 20th century African icons in their own voice.



The five interviews featured in the exhibition are:

- Kenneth Kaunda, the first president of independent Zambia (interviewed in 1979)
- Libertine Amathila, the first black Namibian medical doctor and former Deputy Prime Minister of Namibia (interviewed in 1979)
- Miriam Makeba (interviewed in 1978),
- Nadine Gordimer (interviewed in 1978)

- Oliver Tambo (interviewed in 1985)

Weiss, a renowned journalist and anti-Apartheid activist, worked extensively throughout sub-Saharan Africa covering the liberation-era politics of the region. During her career as a journalist she worked for numerous publications including the Financial Mail, the Guardian (UK), the Times of Zambia, the BBC and the Voice of Germany, and was exiled by South Africa and Rhodesia for her writings.

Internationally acclaimed for her lifelong struggle against racism and inequality, and having been nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize, Weiss is intimately acquainted with these evils, born in 1924 into a Jewish family in Germany and having emigrated in 1936 from Nazi-Germany to South Africa. Her work as a journalist and novelist has received acclaim all over the world, and her novel 'My Sister Sara' was selected as compulsory matriculation reading in the German state of Baden-Württemberg in 2007.

Collection of articles

Weiss, who is in her 90s, lives in Germany again and in addition to her ongoing journalistic engagement, is a productive novelist. Throughout her career, she built up a collection of articles, manuscripts, biographical documents, professional correspondence, research material, photographs and audio recordings that offer a unique insight into the political and social environments of the day.

Weiss will be in South Africa this week to open the exhibition and launch her autobiography, 'A Path through Hard Grass: A journalist's Memories of Exile and Apartheid' (published by Basler Afrika Bibliographien, June 2014).

Basler Afrika Bibliographien (BAB), the Namibia Resource Centre and Southern Africa Library in Switzerland curate the exhibition, in collaboration with the South African Jewish Museum.

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