

Background
and
Education

Dennis Brutus was born in Salisbury, Rhodesia, in 1924 of South African parents (Boer and African). He was educated and brought up in South Africa. In 1947 he obtained a B.A. with distinction in English and psychology from the University of Fort Hare, the well-known college for "non-whites". He also holds a high school teaching diploma, and has taught for 14 years.

Banned from teaching in the 1960s, he studied law at the University of Witswatersrand, but his studies were interrupted by political arrest. He successfully wrote his first year law exams in the prison hospital.

Family

Dennis Brutus is married to a woman of great courage. "When I do things, she pays for it", he says. They have seven children. The family is now reunited in England after many hard years in South Africa.

Writing
Career

As a writer and poet Mr. Brutus has won international recognition, particularly for his volume of poetry: "Sirens, Knuckles and Boots", which was published in 1964 while he was in jail. This volume is now published in the U.S. by the Northwestern University Press.

Sportsman
against
Apartheid

Mr. Brutus has for years been active on the Executive Boards of non-white sports bodies. He united the several black sporting organizations under the banner of the South African Sporting Association, which fought for equality in sport and international recognition of and action against the racism of the white bodies. He also served as President of SANROC (South African Non-racial Olympic Committee), dedicated to similar aims. As these organizations became increasingly vocal and attracted world-wide support, police persecution

mounted, many members were threatened with arrest, or banned, as was Mr. Brutus himself.

As a
Political
Fighter

Brutus had been active against apartheid in education and housing, as well as sport. He was a valuable member of the anti-apartheid movement. In the early 1960s, (as mentioned before) the Government tried to silence him by banning him for teaching, and from membership in any organizations; it banned him from attending any gatherings (even a party or lecture was out of bounds for him); it forbade the publication of any of his writing, it restricted him to residence in one town.

In May 1963 he was arrested for attending, in contravention of his ban, a meeting called for the Chairman of the International Olympic Committee, who was visiting South Africa. While on bail Brutus attempted to go to Germany for an Olympic meeting and got as far as neighboring Mozambique, where he was arrested by the Portuguese police, although he was in possession of a valid Rhodesian passport. He was secretly handed over to the South African Security Police and brought back to Johannesburg where he made a desperate bid to escape, was shot in the back and re-arrested. At the subsequent trial he was sentenced to 18 months imprisonment, having been found guilty of "furthering the aims of communism" - by attending a sports meeting! The magistrate trying the case said that he saw no connection between Communism and the sports meeting, but passed sentence just the same. Brutus served most of his imprisonment on Robben Island, the notorious South African political prison and concentration camp, where Nelson Mandela, Walter Sisulu and other famed opponents of South African racism are now serving life sentences.

Prison

Exit
Permit

On his release in 1965, Mr. Brutus was served with 12 new bans, which included a "house arrest" order. Under these conditions he could no longer find any way in which to support his family, or to continue his political work. He was, therefore, forced to leave South Africa under a one-way "exit permit", which makes it illegal for him to ever return to his native land. He is now living in London, and working on the staff of the Defence and Aid Fund International, thus continuing to devote his life to the struggle for freedom and justice in South Africa.

This
Tour

Mr. Brutus' tour in the United States and Canada is being arranged by the American Committee on Africa, with all net profits going to its Defense and Aid Fund for the assistance of the families of South Africa's 5,000 political prisoners.