



The **Brigalia Bam** Archive Exhibition
Catalogue

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Narratives Preserved, Histories Reclaimed: The Doctor Brigalia Bam Foundation Archive Journey at Nelson Mandela University

Nelson Mandela University takes pride in its commitment to a developmental trajectory that positions itself as an embedded university, dedicated to serving society. Central to this ethos is the establishment of robust solidarity networks with likeminded civil society organisations and institutions, aimed at catalysing transformative change within our society. The partnership launch with the Doctor Brigalia Bam Foundation serves as an exemplar of this principle.

This collaborative endeavour is emblematic of our esteem for leaders who played pivotal roles in the liberation and reconstruction of our nation, particularly during the promising years of our democracy. This resonates profoundly with the intellectual culture we strive to cultivate within our University. As we shape our institutional narrative, mindful of the imperative to decolonise learning environments, our historical narratives gain significance through deliberate choices related to space, race, gender, inclusion, exclusion, and beyond. This historical contextualisation is further enriched by recognising the pivotal yet often overlooked contributions of women.

Today's launch of the partnership holds exceptional significance, as it represents the formal inauguration of our role as the repository for the Dr Brigalia Bam Foundation Archive. This responsibility is taken with utmost gravity and respect. Dr Bam's enduring contributions and her profound impact on South Africa are widely acknowledged. Notably, she served as the first female chancellor of our predecessor institution, The University of Port Elizabeth, prior to its amalgamation into Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University. Her tenure from 2000 to 2004 stands as a testament to her integral part in our transformative journey.

Acknowledging our roots is pivotal for charting our path forward. The commemoration of Dr Bam's legacy aligns with our commitment to preserving our history as we stride into the future. This partnership reinforces our sense of pride in her association with our esteemed institution.

The tangible manifestation of this collaboration is the archive itself, meticulously curated to encompass Dr Bam's multifaceted achievements. This archive, housed within our University's strategic research

entity called "Origins Culture Heritage and Memory," epitomises our deliberate endeavour to spotlight knowledge frameworks traditionally marginalised within the academic sphere. It stands as our concerted response to rectify epistemic injustices that persist. By curating the literary and cultural heritage of black women, we endeavour to rectify historical gender imbalances not only in South Africa but across the globe.

Incorporating the Dr Brigalia Bam Foundation Archive into our academic narrative is both pertinent and pivotal in our mission. Personally, I am profoundly honoured to participate in this initiative in my private capacity. This initiative marks a significant milestone as the inaugural archival collection within the Nelson Mandela University's new archives project.

The archive, received in July 2022, underwent meticulous documentation (inventory, cataloguing, preservation), preparation for exhibition, and digitisation. As the esteemed Czech novelist Milan Kundera (1929) eloquently articulated, [I quote from him: "the struggle of men of course today we would

have said the struggle of humankind against power is the struggle of memory against forgetting" and I close quote]. The archive under discussion stands as a bulwark against oblivion, serving as a conduit for the revival of overlooked histories. The legacy entrusted to us by Dr Bam carries the profound responsibility of enabling us to reclaim and recount our own narratives.

Extract from Professor Sibongile Muthwa's Welcome Address at the Launch of the Doctor Brigalia Bam Archive Exhibition and the Signing of the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) November 2022.

The Brigalia Bam Archive Exhibition

IELSON MANDELA
UNIVERSITY



Doctor Philosophiae 2005

Brigalia Bam



Extract from Dr Brigalia Bam's Keynote Address at the Launch of the Doctor Brigalia Bam Archive Exhibition and the Signing of the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)

Allow me to extend a formal greeting to the esteemed individuals in attendance. I have the privilege of knowing Dr Fraser-Moleketi, the university's chancellor, on a personal level. Similarly, my familiarity extends to the Chair of the Council Ambassador Nozipho January-Bardill. I hold both these figures in high regard and have collaborated with them closely. It is without a doubt that the vice-chancellors shine as our guiding lights in South Africa. Particularly, the female vice-chancellors, Professor Sibongile Muthwa here today, they all hold a special place in my heart, and my admiration for them is unwavering. I'm compelled to stick to my prepared remarks to ensure clarity. Acknowledging the presence of the deputy vice-chancellors, notably Prof Andre Keet, adds to the richness of this gathering. Moreover, a special mention goes out to the executive deans and directors, with a spotlight on Professor Pamela Maseko. She has been an indispensable pillar of support, playing a multifaceted role in our journey.

The classification of our organisation has often been a subject of uncertainty. Do we refer to ourselves as the Brigalia Bam Foundation or identify as the

Self-Development Foundation, our recently adopted name? In the past, we ran under the title Women's Development Foundation, an NGO inaugurated in the years from 1991 to 1992. A novel array of challenges has appeared, prompting my call for the expansion of partnerships. This outreach is indispensable, for our survival hinges on it. We need interdisciplinary cooperation. However, I remain unconvinced that the solution to curbing violence lies solely in apprehending gender-related offenders. While some regard the police as the core of the issue, the source of these perpetrators is still an enigma. Uncertainty lingers over whether there exists a means to transform the socialisation of contemporary male youth.

During our start, the primary aim was to aid women as they navigated their entry into the realm of democracy. This undertaking was particularly arduous due to the prevailing circumstances. The context of a prolonged conflict, often referred to as the women's war, posed considerable challenges. In fact, this struggle endured as the lengthiest of conflicts. The discipline upon which we rely is still uncertain, given the present circumstances wherein

South Africa, home to its poorest population, faces a dire future. The forecast suggests that within two years, segments of the population might be unable to persevere. The most recent United Nations report underscores the plight of South African women, urging us to delve into its contents. As feminists, how do we respond to this information? Our writings often revolve around both individuals and numerous societal aspects. This poses a challenge, and for this, I am deeply appreciative. The University has taken the initiative to foster an arena for discourse and the exchange of ideas. What sets this effort apart is its inclusivity—engaging not only women but also men across the nation. It transcends confinement, stretching the scope of justice-related concerns. For us women, living in a nation that upholds justice is paramount. The acknowledgment of your contribution in creating this space resonates deeply. It addresses a significant challenge our country faces due to our electoral system, a topic I won't delve into now. Our reliance is placed upon a select few who shape policies yet lack platforms for comprehensive engagement.

Feminism is not an isolated entity; it's woven into

the fabric of our nation's existence. Your endeavours are greatly appreciated, and our faith in your mission remains steadfast. The pursuit of a feminine ethos was clear in our actions. We sought a style that exuded the essence of femininity, with a belief in its distinctive ethical qualities. However, challenges abound, presenting a panorama of obstacles before us. The Women's Development Foundation grappled with the intricate task of collaborating with women primarily embedded within political parties. The cream of this group acted with steadfast conviction, striving to uphold feminist principles and concurrently address the plight of impoverished women while being attuned to the dictates of their respective political affiliations.

Allow me to convey that the Women's Development Foundation, in its earlier iteration, endeavoured to engage with women and their empowerment. As I reflect upon those times, a sense of learning appears. While it might seem belated, I hope my message reaches young feminists, wherever they may be. The present juncture is undoubtedly challenging for feminists – perhaps the most challenging I've witnessed. Whether easier times

existed previously stays uncertain; back when I began, we weren't even labelled as feminists. Our conversations centred on women's rights within the context of church and society, tailored to avoid excessive radicalism and irritation. We were mindful of adopting a softer, almost apologetic tone – a conscious choice aimed at supporting an approach that resonated.

The current focus rests on prevention; this perspective resonates strongly with me. It compels us to ponder whether it is solely the police or a larger collective responsible for averting such circumstances. I invite you to delve into this topic as you engage in debate. The sphere of concern extends beyond a single entity; today's feminism and patriarchy grapple with the imperative of including males from a tender age in their discourse.

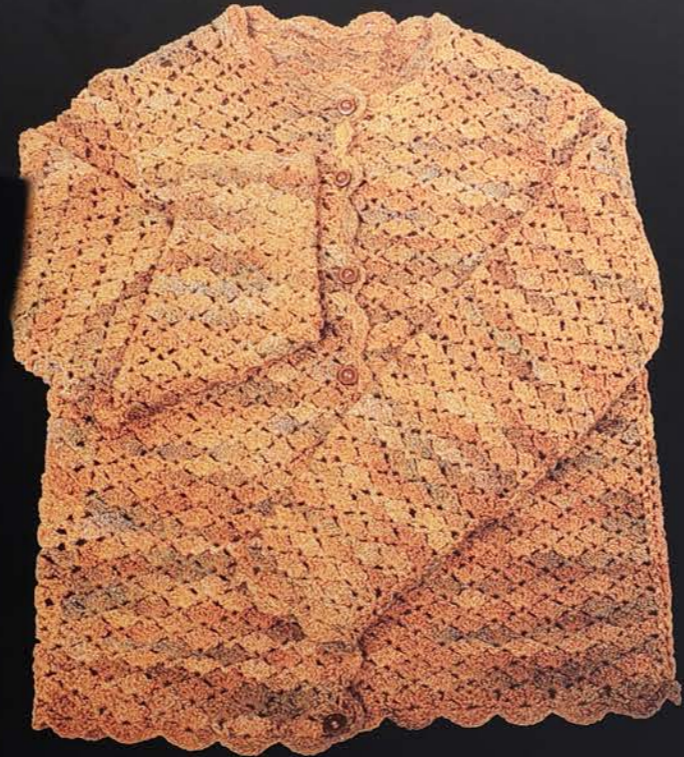
A question surfaces: Should we pioneer an alternative dialogic approach, inviting ordinary women from villages to partake? Ghana offers an example where everyday women visit universities to discuss issues pertinent to their lives. The essence of an institution's prestige lies in its dedicated

individuals. I am enthused; the unveiling of these archives revealed an aspect we were previously unaware of.

The choice of this university piques my curiosity, and I've an anecdote that I often share with others. I often characterise it as a spiritual connection, although I'm uncertain whether it's rooted in spirituality or simply the unique approach adopted by certain individuals. Let me recount this tale once again, perhaps for the twentieth occasion. It's about the instance when we extended an honorary degree to Govan Mbeki. The memory stays etched in my mind, an indelible moment when the room was alive with an unceasing chorus. The people in attendance, their voices lifted in song, mesmerised me as they fluently made every verse. Amidst this musical backdrop, as the third verse played out, I found myself uttering a silent prayer. The uncertainty loomed – what would happen when the song concluded? Our transition from their singing to our speaking needed a seamless shift. Yet, there was an uplifting aspect amidst it all, stemming from the collective celebration. It wasn't solely about me, but rather a jubilation for the community present. Their

leadership, their spirits, that essence which propels everything forward – that was what this celebration signified. Undoubtedly, the history of this region has been chronicled somewhere, destined for the generations on the horizon. Bestowing the name of Nelson Mandela upon it is an honour, a testament to our partnership.

A pressing challenge, both for us and the trajectory of the future, is cultivating inclusive movements from the archives. I come from a generation inclined toward addressing middle-class concerns, focusing on human rights and related issues. Paradoxically, this commitment does not always reverberate as we discuss the plight of women deprived of educational opportunities or those hailing from rural backgrounds. The aspiration for inclusivity has thus appeared as a significant challenge.



Through the years...

The Brigalia Bam Archive Exhibition

Curatorial Statement

Archives hold “evidence of activities which occurred in the past, they tell stories, document people and identity and are valuable sources of information for research. They are our recorded memory and form an important part of our community, cultural, official and unofficial history” (National Archive, 2016).

This exhibition considers some of the artefacts donated to Nelson Mandela University, making up the Special Collection from Dr Brigalia Bam. *The exhibition details awards, letters, textiles, and symbols that personify the life and times of Dr Bam.* The collection aims to show in sections the facets of the work, involvement and deep contributions made by Bam. Reflection and pause areas have been created in the design to illustrate the ongoing questions and nature of transformation and her transforming spirit for change and human rights.

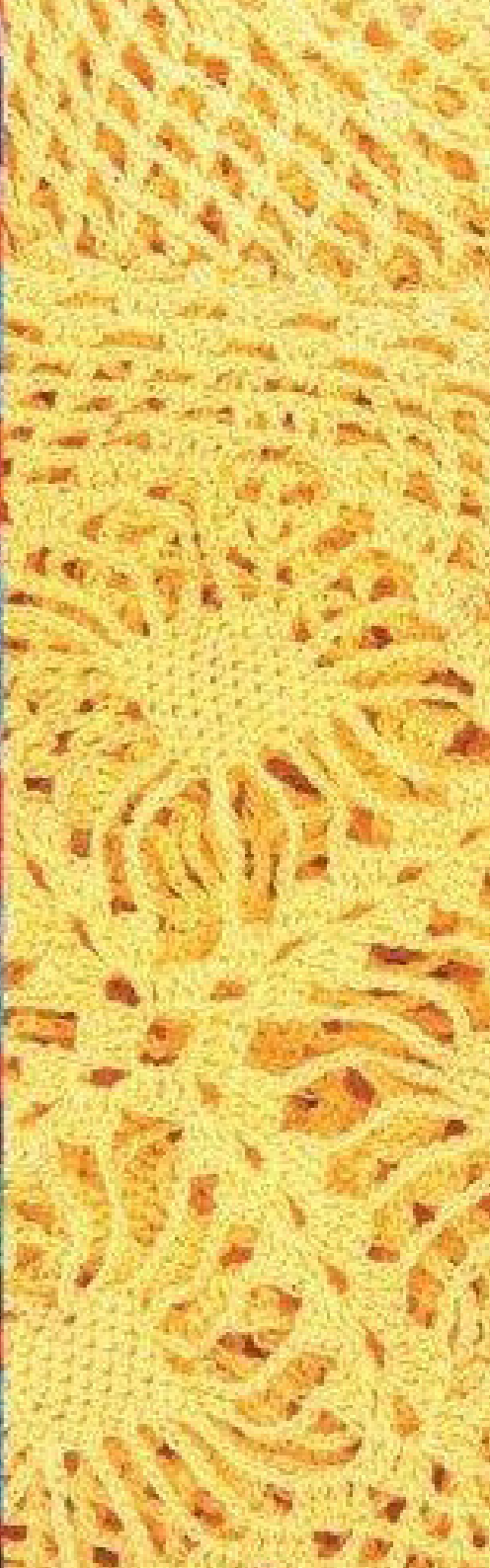
The exhibition begins to locate the areas of personal and nostalgia where connections to roots and family are tied. The politics of belonging in the church; business, and government has given rise to sections of reflection in influential institutions in South Africa and the global stage. Each section in this archive, allows the viewer to consider, “if nothing had been done” what would have happened in South Africa, or in other parts of the world. The archive references action and becomes a call to action in how people conduct their lives in pursuit of social justice and human rights.



The Brigalia Bam Archive Exhibition | Special Collection

TEXTILE (Vital: 55940) Crocheted Jersey in Autumn Colours

In 1978, Mrs Bam Snr visited Dr Bam in Switzerland and was surprised with the extremely cold weather. She then knitted this jersey for her daughter.



The Brigalia Bam Foundation is grateful to have a partnership with the Nelson Mandela University. Through this partnership Nelson Mandela University will **GATHER, RESEARCH, CURATE AND MAKE INFORMATION ON WOMEN'S LEGACIES ACCESSIBLE TO THE NATION FOR GENERATIONS TO COME.** This will contribute towards the broader goal of gender transformation in society. This partnership also aims to create spaces for civil society to strengthen and enhance critical engagements that can contribute to finding meaningful solutions on issues such as democracy, morality, and ethics.



The Brigalia Bam Archive Exhibition | Special Collection

ARTEFACT (Vital: 56486) Ceramic Vase in Cobalt Blue and Gold

This vase was given to Dr Bam by the President, Ben-Bellar of Algeria. He led the revolution of the Algerian people against the French. He was honouring Dr Bam for having visited his home where he was born and raised.



The Brigalia Bam Archive Exhibition | Special Collection

ARTEFACT (Vital: 56545) Blue and White Teaspoon

Gift from the people of Russia for the event where Dr Bam was refused access (on her birthday 2 January) as she was in possession of a United Nations passport.





“Trapped in Interior Space”

Aviwe Makwedini

Medium: Engineered transfer print onto polyester fabric

“This conversational print was designed to tell a story which contains and sends a message. For the concept I chose to look at human trafficking and the abuse of women and children as it is a global issue. In general, conversational prints are used more commonly for apparel wear rather than for furnishing fabrics. I used the opportunity to display the fabric on a chair with the intention of making the viewer aware of the message, but the minute you sit down on it, which is the same as knowing about an issue and doing nothing about it.”

“Trapped in Interior Space” reflects human trafficking, abduction and hiding a person in an unfamiliar place. No human being should be subjected to this crime.

The plight of human trafficking and other social issues form part of activism that makes the world a better place for women and other minorities. The work of Dr Bam throughout her career has centred on human rights and the fight for social justice.



The Brigida Mombemhlope & Sam Mkhizwa SKhonzo



The Brigida Mombemhlope & Sam Mkhizwa SKhonzo



The Brigida Mombemhlope & Sam Mkhizwa SKhonzo



The Brigida Mombemhlope & Sam Mkhizwa SKhonzo

Africa n

and twelve African states during a six-month period in the position of the ANC and their need for funds to bring on how to dismantle the Apartheid state. For a nation rather than overthrow state. This he learnt having travel Ababa undergoing military training before returning home





The Brigalia Bam Archive Exhibition | Special Collection

TEXTILE (Vital: 56484) Yellow Crocheted Table Runner

The table runner is made up of 12 crocheted panels, sewn together by Mrs Bam Snr. Dr Bam saved this crocheted piece while she was in Switzerland, as it reminded her of her mother. Her mother was a teacher and was very talented at textile work who taught other women these skills.





The Brigalia Bam Archive Exhibition | Special Collection

ARTEFACT (Vital: 56842) Wooden Pot

Red, gold and black wooden pot gifted to Dr Bam from Russia.



The Brigalia Bam Archive Exhibition | Special Collection

ARTEFACT (Vital: 56664) Ceramic Mother Mary and Baby Jesus Figurine

This was a gift given to Dr Bam by a group of women in South America.



The Brigalia Bam Archive Exhibition | Special Collection

ARTEFACT (Vital: 57164) South African Synod of The United Congregational Church of Southern Africa

The South African Synod is one of five Synods that constitute the United Congregational Church of Southern Africa.



20 Years of Electoral Democracy

| Year | Electoral System | President | Prime Minister |
|------|-----------------------------|----------------|----------------|
| 1994 | Proportional Representation | Nelson Mandela | Nkomo |
| 1999 | Proportional Representation | Mandela | Mbeki |
| 2004 | Proportional Representation | Mbeki | Mbeki |
| 2009 | Proportional Representation | Mbeki | Modise |
| 2014 | Proportional Representation | Zuma | Zuma |



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NRF SARCHI Chair for African Feminist Imagination

Centre for the Advancement of Non-Racialism and Democracy (CANRAD)

SPECIAL THANKS

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Professor Pamela Maseko

Dr Babalwa Magoqwana

Professor Pumla Gqola



COMPLY [y x]

RURAL WOMEN vs TRANSKEI

Black rural women have been important throughout South African history both in pre-colonial times and in the colonial era. In pre-colonial times, they were essential to the rural economy of the region and, through their control of the rural economy, they were central to agricultural production and rural life. They were also the chief means of passing on the production and reproductive skills for a household. In the post-colonial era, rural women were paid for their skills which had high economic and symbolic importance. The rural women were the main source of food for the rural economy. They worked without power and reproductive capacity was the cornerstone of wealth production and rural economy. It was affected in a variety of ways over time.

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“Wide migrancy radically undermined women's security, it created greater independence for them.”

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SPIRITUALITY AND RESISTANCE

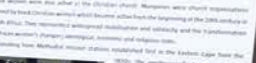
In the wake of the defeat of the Xhosa nation during the last decades of the 19th century, the early decades of the 20th century saw the rise of African resistance to colonialism, not only in the form of the African National Congress (ANC) in 1912, but also in religious and spiritual responses. A number of prophets and millenarian prophecies arose, as well as Christian women's groupings known as Manyanos in the Methodist Church and Mothers Unions in the Anglican Church.

PROPHETS



Makhele Makhoshe 1875-1915
Born in 1875 in Tshepo, Makhele was a prophet who led a movement of resistance against the British in the Transkei region of South Africa. He was a member of the African National Congress (ANC) and the Transkei National Congress (TNC). He was a prominent figure in the struggle for the liberation of South Africa.

BLACK WOMEN'S MANYANOS



Black women were also active in the liberation struggle. They were central to the formation of the African National Congress (ANC) and the Transkei National Congress (TNC). They were also active in the formation of the African National Congress (ANC) and the Transkei National Congress (TNC). They were also active in the formation of the African National Congress (ANC) and the Transkei National Congress (TNC).

SOUBRIETY

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WRITING

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UNIFORMS

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RESISTANCE

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Small text caption for the large line drawing.

NELSON MANDELA
UNIVERSITY

This exhibition catalogue forms part of our institutional Archive and Exhibition Centre collection.