

## **“Amy and the ANC: A Scholar-Activist in South Africa, 1992-93”**

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Of the approximately 18,000 people who lost their lives in South Africa’s political violence during the last decade of apartheid (1984-94), the deaths of two people shocked South Africans more than all of the others: Chris Hani and Amy Biehl. Hani was one of the ANC’s most widely admired leaders at the time of his assassination in April 1993, while Amy Biehl was an American Fulbright scholar when she was killed in Gugulethu four months later. Chris Hani’s life and career were well known to South Africans long before his death, but Amy Biehl only became famous after her murder. While the details of her death were reported extensively in the American and South African press, relatively little was revealed about Amy’s work in South Africa in the 10 months before she was killed. When reporters wrote about her work, they often noted that she was an “exchange student” who was working on “voter education” in South Africa. Neither was technically correct. Instead, she was a scholar-activist who was conducting research on the role of women in South Africa’s transition to democracy. She actively supported this transition and worked to promote the rights of black South African women in particular. While based at the University of the Western Cape, she developed extraordinarily close ties to the ANC, working with such future leaders as Dullah Omar, Brigitte Mabandla, Albie Sachs, and the ANC Women’s League. My paper will argue that Amy Biehl contributed in substantive ways to the ANC’s constitutional thinking on women’s rights and that her bonds with the ANC contributed to the extraordinary outcry over her death.