

**- For Immediate Media Release -**  
**RELEASE OF SIMON NKOLI'S PRISON LETTERS PART OF FESTIVITIES OF  
JO'BURG GAY PRIDE WEEK**

On October 1<sup>st</sup> Gay and Lesbian Memory in Action (GALA) will be joined by Justice Edwin Cameron to launch an exciting new publication, the first of the GALA booklet series: '**Till the Time of Trial: The Prison Letters of Simon Nkoli**' edited by Shaun de Waal and Karen Martin. The launch is one of the events marking the upcoming Johannesburg Gay and Lesbian Pride Festival Week, and is accompanied by a screening of the documentary **Simon and I**. It also marks the tenth anniversary of the existence of GALA.

For the four years he was in prison, in between tough preparations for the Delmas treason trial and attending the long hearings, Simon Nkoli wrote letter after letter. They were to friends, comrades, and later to his supporters overseas. This selection from his letters shows the political positions as well as the deep personal needs of South Africa's most well-loved LGBT rights activist.

"This publication is the first in a series on LGBT history" says GALA director Ruth Morgan, "We chose as its subject Simon Nkoli and the letters he wrote from prison because the letters form one of the most important collections at GALA, and because Simon stands so powerfully for the idea that human rights cannot be separated. It's particularly appropriate to launch this publication during Pride week this year as Simon helped to organize the first Gay Pride march in 1990 and this year also marks the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his birth".

**Keynote Address:** Justice Edwin Cameron  
**Time:** 14:00-16:00  
**Date:** Monday, 1 October 2007  
**Venue:** Old Fort conference room, Constitution Hill

**For more information or a PDF of the publication and images contact:**  
Anthony Manion, GALA  
Tel: 011 717 1963 (w) or 073 191 5742 (mobile)  
Email: [anthony.manion@wits.ac.za](mailto:anthony.manion@wits.ac.za)

**The Delmas Trial** was one of the most high-profile of trials on the 1980s because there were key UDF office-bearers among the accused, in particular Mosiuoa "Terror" Lekota and Popo Molefe who are mentioned by Simon in his letters. Eventually the trial was declared invalid by the appeals court and Simon and the others were acquitted of all the charges.

**Simon's letters** to Roy Shepherd, his lover at the time of his arrest, are the core of his enormous correspondence, held at GALA. Out of hundreds of pages of letters, the editors have extracted and adapted segments which tell not only the big story of a South African hero, but also give the details of his humanity. The selection from his letters to Roy shows Simon grappling with being on trial and the challenges of living in prison – in particular with being gay in these circumstances.

**A lgbt and struggle hero:** Simon Tseko Nkoli was born in 1957 in Soweto. He got involved in the 1976 students' uprising, and was detained by the police again and again between 1976 and 1981. Simon's coming out to his co-trialists is an important moment in the development of gay rights in South Africa: the possibilities for gay liberation in South Africa began to glimmer into a realisable future. Simon died in hospital from HIV related illnesses at age 41 on 30 November 1998.