

OBITUARY

OBITUARY



She was a dedicated member of our church and the first lay canon in the Diocese of Johannesburg.

# SHEENA DUNCAN

## VOICE OF THE VOICELESS

**S**heena Duncan, Black Sash stalwart, activist, staunch Anglican, leading member of the SA Council of Churches, as well as chairperson and patron of Gun-Free South Africa, died peacefully in her sleep at her home in Johannesburg in the early hours of 4 May.

She was 78 and had been battling illness for some time.

Her mother, June Sinclair, had been a founding member of the Sash and Duncan joined in 1963. She served two terms as national president before becoming the founding chairperson of the Black Sash Trust. She was later the organisation's first patron. In 2006, she was appointed grand counsellor of the Order of the Baobab for what the citation called "her excellent contribution to the struggle for a non-sexist, just and democratic South Africa".

She leaves two daughters, Lindsay and Carey, and two grandchildren.

In his condolences to the family on behalf of the Anglican Church of Southern Africa, Archbishop Thabo Makgoba said, "I thank God for the gift of her remarkable life. The Psalmist wrote, 'Who rises up for me against the wicked? Who stands up for me against the evildoers?' (Ps 94:16.) We are grateful that Sheena dared to take that stand on behalf of so many in this country who were oppressed.

"A voice for the voiceless, her readiness to speak up, no matter what, made an exceptional contribution to the life of our nation. Not only was she a fierce campaigner of human rights and the reign of God, she was a dedicated member of our church and the first lay canon in the Diocese of Johannesburg. A clear thinker and a woman of integrity and strength, she will long be remembered by all who benefitted from her courage."

Marcella Naidoo, Black Sash national director, said Duncan had been the leading expert in understanding the effect of the apartheid-era pass laws and exposing their absurdity.

"Equally important was her commitment to finding peaceful ways of opposing oppression and injustice," Naidoo said.

"Indeed, this will be her legacy: an enduring commitment to work for justice, an unshaken faith in peaceful ways of doing so, and a warm and courageous heart for supporting those who suffer."

Nelson Mandela wrote to her from prison in 1985: "To speak with a firm and clear voice on major national questions, unprotected by the shield of immunity enjoyed by members of the country's organs of government, and unruffled by the countless repercussions of being ostracised by a privileged minority, is a measure of your deep concern for human rights and commitment to the principle of justice for all." †

# RIP