

MAIN TOPIC

DISA/Aluka topic #372 (Return of exiles)

IP rights: Since the identity of the interviewee remains unknown, there is are no IP rights

"D-B-", a returned exile

Notes on a conversation with Gail M. Gerhart, New York City, September 26, 1990

D-B- returned yesterday from six weeks in South Africa. She went into exile six years ago, in 1984.

The violence around Johannesburg now has been far worse than anything in 1984-86 when the uprising was at its height. Though morale generally is high in Soweto, there is tension between insider activists and returnees. People who never left South Africa are fearful that the returnees will have better qualifications and will try to take over everything, especially jobs, which are scarce.

Returnees (and those still living abroad) on the other hand have greatly underestimated the political sophistication of people at home (even those with much less education). The outsiders are actually relatively naive about conditions at home, yet they tend to believe they have all the answers anyway. This puts off the insiders.

One group really in a quandary are the returnees with East bloc degrees; nobody wants to hire them. The same old business community is in control and will continue to be, it seems; they don't want these people whom they assume will be troublemakers. This is going to affect a lot of people, who are very disillusioned.

Meanwhile for returnees a lot of things seem markedly different: for example, no longer having to waste endless time getting your pass fixed, waiting in lines at offices for this purpose, running around with the red tape-all of that is just gone.