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Ethnography of SWAPO's Exile Camps

Christian A. Williams

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## National Liberation in Postcolonial Southern Africa

Tracing the South West Africa People's Organization (SWAPO) across its three decades in exile, this book examines the rich, local histories of the camps where Namibian exiles lived in Tanzania, Zambia, and Angola. Christian A. Williams highlights how different Namibians experienced these sites, as well as the tensions that developed within SWAPO as Namibians encountered one another and as officials asserted their power and protected their interests within a national community. The book then follows Namibians who lived in exile into postcolonial Namibia, examining the extent to which divisions and hierarchies that emerged in the camps continue to shape how Namibians relate to one another today, undermining the more just and humane society that many had imagined. In developing these points about SWAPO, the book draws attention to Southern African literature more widely, suggesting parallels across the region and defining a field of study that examines postcolonial Africa through "the camp."

Christian A. Williams is a Postdoctoral Fellow at the Institute for Reconciliation and Social Justice at the University of the Free State.

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# National Liberation in Postcolonial Southern Africa

*A Historical Ethnography of SWAPO's  
Exile Camps*

CHRISTIAN A. WILLIAMS

*University of the Free State, South Africa*



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This book is written primarily with and about people who experienced Namibia's liberation struggle. The names of those who contributed to the book directly are scattered throughout the text and references that follow. Nevertheless, there are several individuals and organizations that I especially wish to acknowledge here.

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Abbreviations

AFP	<i>Agence France-Presse</i>
AME	African Methodist Episcopal Church
ANC	African National Congress
BAB	<i>Basler Afrika Bibliographien</i>
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
BWS	Breaking the Wall of Silence Movement
CANU	Caprivi African National Union
CCN	Council of Churches of Namibia
CCZ	Christian Council of Zambia
DELK	<i>Deutsche Evangelisch-Lutherische Kirche</i>
DTA	Democratic Turnhalle Alliance
EIN	Ecumenical Institute for Namibia
ELC	Evangelical Lutheran Church in South West Africa
ELOC	Evangelical Lutheran Ovambo-Kavango Church
Exco	SWAPO National Executive Committee
FNLA	<i>Frente Nacional para Libertação de Angola</i>
FRELIMO	<i>Frente de Libertação de Moçambique</i>
G1	the first SWALA group to infiltrate Namibia
G2	the second SWALA group to infiltrate Namibia
ICC	International Criminal Court
ICJ	International Court of Justice
ICRC	International Committee for the Red Cross
ICTJ	International Center for Transitional Justice
IDAF	International Defence and Aid Fund
IGFM	<i>Internationale Gesellschaft für Menschenrechte</i>
ISHR	International Society for Human Rights
LWF	Lutheran World Federation
LWI	Lutheran World Information
MK	<i>Umkhonto we Sizwe</i>
MPLA	<i>Movimento Popular para Libertação de Angola</i>
NAN	National Archives of Namibia

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NBC	Namibian Broadcasting Corporation
NISER	Namibian Institute for Social and Economic Research
NSHR	National Society for Human Rights
OAU	Organization of African Unity
OPC	Ovamboland People's Congress
OPO	Ovamboland People's Organization
PCC	Political Consultative Council
PLAN	People's Liberation Army of Namibia
PUM	Patriotic Unity Movement
RDP	Rally for Democracy and Progress
SADET	South Africa Democracy and Education Trust
SADF	South African Defence Force
SIDA	Swedish International Development Agency
SPARC	SWAPO Party Archive
SWALA	South West Africa Liberation Army
SWANU	South West Africa National Union
SWAPO	South West Africa People's Organization
SWAPO-D	SWAPO-Democrats
SWATF	South West African Territorial Force
SYL	SWAPO Youth League
TRC	Truth and Reconciliation Commission
UCT	University of Cape Town
UDF	United Democratic Front
UN	United Nations
UNAM	University of Namibia
UNHCR	United Nations High Commission for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNIN	United Nations Institute for Namibia
UNIP	United National Independence Party
UNITA	<i>União para Independência Total de Angola</i>
UNMD	United Nations Mission on Detainees
UNTAG	United Nations Transition Assistance Group
UWC	University of the Western Cape
VEM	<i>Vereinigte Evangelische Mission</i>
WENELA	Witwatersrand Native Labour Association
WFP	United Nations World Food Programme
ZANU	Zimbabwe African National Union
ZAPU	Zimbabwe African People's Union



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MAP 1. Southern Africa.

