

Professor Janet Cherry

Professor of Development Studies at Nelson Mandela University, Janet Cherry, has successfully combined an academic life with activism for over 40 years, with most of her work focused on the Eastern Cape.

Prof Cherry completed a BA at the University of Cape Town in 1982, majoring in economic history and industrial sociology, and served as General Secretary of the National Union of South African Students (NUSAS) in 1983. The following year, she moved to Port Elizabeth (Gqeberha) in 1984, where she established the East Cape Adult Education Project and the PE Crisis Information Centre.

During the mid-1980s, she was active in the United Democratic Front, enduring a long period of detention without trial.

After four years of activism, working in human rights and adult education NGOs, she completed an Honours degree in Economic History at the University of Cape Town (UCT). While working as a research consultant for the Black Sash, the Institute for a Democratic Alternative for South Africa (IDASA) and the Centre for Development Studies (CDS), she completed a Masters degree by research in Economic History at UCT, which was awarded with distinction.

Prof Cherry lectured in Political Studies and International Relations at Rhodes University in Grahamstown (now Makhanda) from 1992 to 1994 before returning to Qqeberha and setting up a development and research consultancy, ABC Consultants. ABC engaged in research and training for, among others, the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) and the South African Local Government Association (SALGA).

From 1996 to 1998, Prof Cherry worked as a member of the research team of the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission and from 1998 to 2003 as a senior lecturer in the Department of Sociology at the then University of Port Elizabeth (UPE).

In 2001 she was awarded a PhD from Rhodes University for her thesis, "Kwazakhele: The Politics of Transition in South Africa".

From 2003 to 2005, she was employed as a Senior Research Specialist in the Democracy and Governance programme of the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC), and from 2005 to 2009 was a Senior Lecturer and Research Associate in the newly formed Department of Development Studies at Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University (NMMU).

Prof Cherry has also served as a research consultant to the South African Democracy Education Trust (SADET), the Red Location Museum, the Foundation for Human Rights, the International Council on Human Rights Policy, and the International Center on Nonviolent Conflict and has been a trainer for the Centre for Applied Nonviolent Action and Strategies, and the Pan African Peace and Nonviolence Network.

She has been involved in a number of international and national research projects. She has published widely in the fields of democratisation, democratic participation, South African liberation history, sustainable development, gender and human rights, labour, transitional justice and civil resistance. She has published three books, *Umkhonto we Sizwe (The Making of an African Working Class: Port Elizabeth 1925-1963)*, and *Blot on the Landscape and Centre of Resistance: A social and economic history of Korsten*.

She has supervised eight Doctoral students in the fields of sustainable development in the context of climate change, conservation agriculture, citizen science, cooperatives development, post-war development, land policy and livelihoods diversification. Her current research interest is in conducting participatory action research on the just energy transition and regional policies for sustainable development in Zimbabwe, Malawi, Mozambique and South Africa.

Over the decades she has been an activist in many organisations and campaigns including the United Democratic Front, the End Conscription Campaign, the African National Congress, the Nelson Mandela Bay Transition Network and the Palestine Solidarity Alliance.

Prof Cherry received the Distinguished Old Rhodian Award in 2013 for her intellectual and political leadership.

Prof Janet Cherry's many years of campaigning tirelessly for human rights and social justice have earned her a well-deserved Doctor of Laws (LLD) (honouris causa) from Rhodes University. This award will be conferred at the Rhodes University graduation ceremony at 09h30 on 30 March 2023.