



In Africa, Amy worked with Rhoda Khadali on women's issues and Dullah Omar on the Bill of Rights. She also befriended the heads of the ANC and the Women's League (including Albertina Sisulu and Bridget Mbandla), but she was not an active member of the party. Amy was better described as a facilitator, bringing several groups together with the common goal of creating a free and democratic South Africa.

On 25 August, 1993, Amy Biehl's life was tragically cut short in an act of political mob violence in the Guguletu Township outside of Cape Town. Four young men were convicted and sentenced to 18 years imprisonment for her murder. When the Truth and Reconciliation Commission was established, the young men applied for amnesty. Determined to honour Amy's love of South Africa and her belief in the truth and reconciliation process, Amy's parents participated in the commission's hearings and supported amnesty for the youths. The four were granted amnesty and released from prison in 1998.

One year prior to their release, the Amy Biehl Foundation was founded by Peter and Linda Biehl. The foundation focuses on the development and the empowerment of youth from the age of five to 18 in the townships. Through educational and cultural activities, the foundation offers the youth healthy alternatives to all the negative influences. It was Amy herself who hoped to unlock the creative talent of the youth, ultimately fostering future leaders and entrepreneurs. In a twist of fate and a further testament to the faith that Amy had in people, the young men convicted of her murder now spend their time working for the foundation counselling youth.

From an early age, Amy would set her mind on a goal or idea and refuse to let go of it. Her parents, Peter and Linda Biehl, believe intuition was her guide in the pursuit of these goals. They recall a story of Amy when at the age of four, she met the Lone Ranger at a restaurant in Santa Monica and adopted his façade for four months. When she refused to remove the mask for her first week of pre-school in Tuscon, Linda had to work out a compromise. This was probably the last time that Amy would negotiate her strong beliefs.

Amy attended Santé Fe High School, where she heard the story of Nelson Mandela and applied her signature determination to the cause. The call to "Free Mandela" was advertised on her postcards, letters, notebooks

# ACCORDING *Amy* TO

Amy Biehl began her journey in California, described as determined, fearless and often quirky, she would be called to Africa after hearing the story of Nelson Mandela. Her quest was to fight for human rights and bring healing to South Africa as it suffered under apartheid rule. **Daniela Panzeri** goes behind the story of the Amy Biehl Foundation

and even her graduation cap. This was the beginning of her lifelong passion for human rights. In her twenties, Amy continued to show an original combination of passionate determination and academic rationale. Her strong commitment to service exposed her to many high-level political figures as she worked as an intern for Congressman Bart Gordon of Tennessee. But her heart belonged to Africa.

The Amy Biehl Foundation will be hosting its annual gala dinner at The Cape Town International Convention Centre on 7 November 2009 in order to raise funds to sustain and grow their programmes in the townships in and around Cape Town. Tickets are being sold at R1 000 each and include dinner, wine, entertainment, an auction, spot prizes as well as a lovely goody bag. Yvonne Chaka Chaka, Aviva Pelham, Sibongile Khumalo and the children of the Foundation will all perform at the event. To book your seats please email [lchen@amybiehl.co.za](mailto:lchen@amybiehl.co.za)