

Feminism, Philosophy and Labor Rights: Drucilla Cornell



Drucilla Cornell

(June 16, 1950 – December 12, 2022)

Drucilla Cornell, a widely influential philosopher and feminist theorist, died in Manhattan on December 12, 2022. For the past 25 years, she served as a founding member of the Board of Advisors of Hofstra’s Center for the Study of Labor and Democracy.

Her many books and plays range across political and legal philosophy, ethics, deconstruction, critical theory, and feminism. She was Professor of Political Science, Comparative Literature and Women’s & Gender Studies at Rutgers University the State University of New Jersey; Professor Extraordinaire at the University of Pretoria, South Africa; and a Visiting Professor at Birkbeck College, University of London. Before that, she taught for many years on the law faculties of the University of Pennsylvania and Cardozo Law School of Yeshiva University.

She received her undergraduate education at Stanford University and Antioch College and then earned a Juris Doctorate (J.D.) from the University of California Los Angeles (1981).

She is the author or co-author of nearly two dozen books, including *The Imaginary Domain*, *The Philosophy of the Limit*, and *Law and Revolution in South Africa*. In 2008-09, she held the National Research Foundation Chair in Customary Law, Indigenous Values, and the Dignity Jurisprudence at the University of Cape Town. There she founded the uBuntu project, which has produced several books and a documentary film, entitled *uBuntu Hoka*. She served as the project’s co-director with Chuma Himonga, and was also co-director of the uBuntu Township Project.

She has also written works for the stage. Her first play was a dramatic adaptation of *Finnegans Wake* which continues to be performed on Bloomsday. Her other plays -- 'The Dream Cure', 'Background Interference', and 'Lifeline' -- have been produced in New York and other cities in the US and South Africa.

Her longtime concerns with inequality and worker rights began in the 1970s through her work as a union organizer, first in Silicon Valley semiconductor factories, followed by organizing both electronics and clerical workers in and around New York City. She wrote about those years in a “There Is Power in a Union: How I Became a Labor Activist,” an article in our *Regional Labor Review* (Fall 2020).

She is survived by her daughter, Sarita Cornell, her former husband, Gregory DeFreitas, both of New York City, her sister Jill Gwaltney and brother Brad Cornell, both of Southern California.

A memorial service will be held in early June. Those wishing to honor her memory are encouraged to make donations to: Jobs With Justice (www.jwj.org/ways-to-give) and Greenpeace Africa (www.greenpeace.org/africa). Questions about the event can be emailed to: DrucillasFamily@gmail.com

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