

S Olive Schreiner (1855 – 1920)

AWARDED TO
OLIVE SCHREINER
FOR HER EXCEPTIONAL
CONTRIBUTION TO
LITERATURE AND
COMMITMENT TO THE
STRUGGLE FOR HUMAN
RIGHTS AND DEMOCRACY



THE ORDER OF IKHAMANGA IN GOLD (POSTHUMOUS)

Olive Schreiner was born in 1855 in Basutoland (Lesotho). Her parents were missionaries and the family later moved to an isolated part of the Cape Colony.

Olive found work as a governess and then taught at the Kimberley New School. In her free time she began work on a novel about life in South Africa. Later, while at medical school, Schreiner's first novel, *The Story of an African Farm*, was published in 1883.

The Story of an African Farm was acclaimed by the critics. The book sold well in both Britain and America. Schreiner followed *The Story of an African Farm* with two collections of short stories, *Dreams* (1891) and *Dream Life and Real Life* (1893).

In 1894, Schreiner returned to South Africa where she continued to write. Her next book, *Trooper Peter Halkett of Mashonaland* (1897), was a strong attack on imperialism and British racism in South Africa. She also published *Women and Labour* in 1911.

At the outbreak of the First World War, Schreiner moved back to Britain. Over the next four years she was active in the peace movement. Schreiner returned to South Africa in August 1920, the same year she passed away.

Schreiner was a strong supporter of universal suffrage, arguing that the vote was 'a weapon by which the weak may be able to defend themselves against the strong, the poor against the rich'.

Olive Schreiner wrote extensively to the British press, giving vent to her observations of oppressive practices in the Cape Colony and took an active role in lobbying for liberal colonial government policies.