



Dianne Stewart compiled and edited *Durban in a Word*, a collection of reflections on the city, by a number of prominent KwaZulu-Natal writers. She says that ‘from her first glimpse of the city of Durban from the deck of a Union-Castle liner one March morning, she felt an affinity for the city that sweeps along the edge of the Indian Ocean at 29 degrees South and 31 degrees East.’

Before moving to Durban, Dianne Stewart lived in the Eastern Cape. She attended Collegiate School for Girls in Port Elizabeth and then spent a year in the United States of America as an AFS scholar. At Rhodes University, she obtained a B.A. degree in Xhosa and Psychology. This was followed by an Honours degree in African Languages.

Throughout her career, Stewart has worked extensively in the field of the oral tradition. It inspired many of her children’s books including *The Dove* and *The Gift of the Sun* which has been translated into Danish, Norwegian, Swedish, French, Spanish, Xhosa, Zulu Afrikaans and South Korean.

Her study of African Languages inspired her to publish a collection of African proverbs called *Wisdom from Africa*, and for her Masters degree in South African Literature she collected the songs of rural Zulu woman on sugar-cane farms on the north coast, which are powerful examples of socio-political oral poetry. Some of this work appeared in *Women Writing Africa: Southern Region* published by Feminist Press, New York.

Dianne Stewart is very influenced by the landscape. She has drawn inspiration from the north coast of KwaZulu Natal for her books and Plettenberg Bay provided the setting for her short story ‘The Crash’ which won the Maskew Miller ‘Young Africa’ award, her youth novel *Chasing the Wind* which is being used in South African schools, and a collection of essays called *Sea, Sand and Sky*.

In 2008 Stewart completed her Masters degree in Creative Writing from the University of Cape Town. She won the Indwe Risk Short Story competition for her piece 'Bread for the Journey.' She teaches creative writing to adult groups and in schools and writes full time from her home on the North Coast, near Stanger/KwaDukuza.

Extract from *Durban in a Word*

Like a lexicographer, I try to define Durban in a word. But the urban, suburban sprawl that is home to nearly four million people defies definition and I ramble on into sentences, paragraphs and pages, trying to capture its essence...

I still remember my fascination with the ricksha pullers that ferried tourists along the Marine Parade. Although their athletic prowess was admirable, it was their headgear, zebra-striped sandals (recycled from car tyres) and the colourful disc-like earplugs that they wore in their ears that interested me more. I can still remember my excitement when I came across rare, antique Zulu earplugs for sale at the African Art Centre. That was where I met some of South Africa's finest printmakers and artists, many of whom trained at Rorke's Drift and have since become world-renowned...

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