

FEDTRAW



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WOMEN'S DAY
TODAY, IS
FREEDOM DAY
TOMORROW

Editorial

In reference to all the struggles that have been waged by our women as an integral part of the whole national struggle, we remember that historical day, August 9th 1956, when our gallant women, from every different racial, class and personal background marched to the Union Buildings to protest against the extension of passes to women.

With all the defiance campaigns and activities that women engaged themselves in during the late 50's and early 60's it was not surprising that the regime clamped down on the congress movement and detained and brought to court women who were part and parcel of the congress alliance and who were members of FEDSAW.

Historically the women's track on the national struggle did not end inside the courts of the regime in prison or in exile; the struggle for equality, non-sexism and national liberation continued.

Because of the determination, commitment and dedication to our struggle, we saw the emergence of women's structures at regional level. The formation in the 70s and 80s of FEDTRAW, NOW, UWCO, PEWO, COBOW, were symbols of resistance by women nationally and they embarked side by side with other liberation forces on numerous campaigns and projects.

The formation of the COSATU women's forum as a structure that would address issues related to women at work is also another leap forward, and this can be noted: demands that have been met by some employers such as maternity and paternity bene-

fits, and other demands that are related only to women have become part of the package for negotiations at factory floor.

With the campaign that the church took on standing for the truth, the church international has pledged solidarity with women as part and parcel of the church. The launch of the women's decade is also a contributory factor that proves the mood of women for justice, be it in the church or wherever.

The regime has tried to tame the anger of the tigresses and it have failed even with the declaration of the State of Emergency which is still effective now. Even during the repressive times when some of our women were put behind bars and others restricted, the struggle continued, women kept on to their convictions. During his era of repression and harassment, initiatives were made to revive FEDSAW. Also, recently, the role of women within the MDM was marked when Ma-Sisulu, Sister Bernard and Jessie were part of the national delegation that went to meet the U.S. President and also had an invitation from Mrs 10 Downing Street (Thatcher). This is really an historical event for women, for in the history of our national struggle we have never had a delegation of any form that would be led by women.

With the formation of W.A.R. (Women Against Repression), we witnessed an alliance and consolidation of women from every walk of life. This was an initiative in response to the hunger strike that detainees embarked on to demand their

release and the upliftment of the State of Emergency. WAR organised a number of activities in solidarity with the hunger strike and still continues to take up issues related to repression.

Presently, women have a very challenging task facing them. We have a task of making sure that we are full and direct participants in bringing an end to apartheid. In this process we mustn't lose sight of the fact that the liberation of women is not automatic. We must at all times assert the position of women within the MDM and ensure that issues pertaining to women are on the agenda of every organisation.

We need to examine more extensively our role in a free, democratic, unitary, non-sexist future South Africa. We can only meet these challenging tasks ahead of us if we speak with one united voice.

We can only do this by examining the factors that presently contribute to our oppression and our inhibitions, and which deny us the right to fully realise our potential.



Bush and Thatcher hear the Truth!

About two months ago, Ma Sisulu received a personal invitation from George Bush to meet him at the White House.

This invitation was a major breakthrough for the Democratic Movement for two reasons:

1) This was the first invitation ever extended to the Democratic Movement to visit the White House.

2) The invitation was extended to a leading woman within the democratic movement, which is a real boost for the women's movement.

The invitation demonstrates the world-wide respect and credibility enjoyed by Ma Sisulu. It took a woman of the calibre of Ma Sisulu to create this opportunity for the mass democratic movement.

In response to the invitation, a delegation was put together consisting of Ma Sisulu, Sister Bernard, Titus Mofolo, Curnick Ndlovu, Azar Cachalia and Jessie Duarte.

For Ma Sisulu, Sister Bernard and Azar Cachalia, this invitation provided them with their first opportunity in years to leave South Africa. It would have been far too embarrassing for Vlok and his henchmen to refuse the passports of a delegation called in response to an invitation from the President of the United States.

This invitation also provided us with a further breakthrough. Mrs Thatcher, who up to this point had chosen to ignore the MDM, was forced to meet the delegation.

For years we have had other people talking to both the U.S. and British governments on our behalf. For the first time we were provided with an opportunity to speak for ourselves, to highlight our plight and defend our own position in the White House and No 10 Downing Street.

The objectives of this trip were to:

- * draw the world's attention to human rights abuses in South Africa e.g. restrictions, detentions, assassina-



tions, hangings and the displacement of anti-Apartheid activists;

- * inform the West of our view of the current state of affairs in South Africa;

- * fight for the legal space for democratic organisations and activists;

- * further isolate the racist regime internationally;

- * clarify the position that has been taken internationally by the church on actions.

In addition to the governments of both Britain and the United States the delegation met a significant number of politicians and influential people.

What has been achieved?

Ultimately, the major objectives of the trip were fulfilled. In their meetings with Bush and Thatcher, human rights issues were highlighted. Some of the myths and confusion around the whole issue of mandatory sanctions were clarified, as well as our position on negotiations and the necessary pre-conditions for such a process.

Both Bush and Thatcher have given undertakings to address the issue of repression. The Bush Administration agreed to put a special focus on the South African problem. Margaret Thatcher re-iterated her anti-sanctions policy and her position on the whole question of violence.

The delegation also had the opportunity to meet members of opposition parties, leading members of congress and anti-apartheid organisations. Some of the significant consequences of this trip still remain to be evaluated over a period of time.

We can say with confidence that the trip undertaken by Mama and her delegation can only serve to strengthen the mass democratic movement. We can be assured that they truly echoed all our voices to the international community.

We salute Mama and her delegation for fulfilling such a mammoth task with such great success.

"We Love Our

In 1984, The Eldorado Park Women's Group, recognising the inadequate provision of preschool facilities in the area, decided to embark on a Pre-School project. They started off as volunteer teachers doing the best they could without financial backing or equipment or apparatus for the pre-school. Despite all the obstacles the preschool grew. It developed a good reputation in the community. In 1988 the Women's Group felt confident enough to extend the project and it now includes three 'house schools'. These are situated in more depressed areas and offer children the opportunity for additional stimulation that they would not normally have had.

It became evident that a preschool service is the kind of project that will attract community involvement and attention. Through such a project opportunity can be created for women whose self-confidence and competence can be developed by virtue of their participation in the service. This also provided the parents with the opportunity to be directly involved in the education of their children. Both teachers and parents can also develop a better understanding as to why resources for themselves and their children are generally inadequate and inaccessible.

For these reasons the other women's groups affiliated to Fedtraw asked the Eldorado Park Women's Group in 1988 to share their experi-

ence and skills with them. The women began by discussing what they would like to see happening in the pre-schools that were to be established. The women agreed that it was necessary to evaluate methods applied in other pre-schools, and to decide what would be useful in their own communities. Where necessary, the material would be either adapted or replaced. This has happened particularly in the area of culture: women have written their own stories, rhymes and songs to substitute for those that were racist or sexist, or somehow undermining or a person's dignity or worth. Within the pre-schools, sharing of decision making and the appreciation of one's own value and uniqueness have been emphasized.

By the beginning of this year, the women's enthusiasm had led to several pre-schools being established in Soweto, Noordgesig, Eldorado Park, Rivonia, Evaton and Tafelkop areas. It soon emerged that in order to offer a reasonable service, and to set up and maintain acceptable standards, that the teachers required a basic training. Ten women have participated in each of the two training programs which have been run. Each program includes a block on psycho-social issues, one on teaching methods and input, and one on practical experience. Trainees then sit an exam which has both written and oral components as well as a practical dem-



onstration of skills. The teachers are evaluated by the trainers, the FED-TRAW executive and experts in pre-school education.

The project now serves about 600 children and their families. Whilst we can already reflect on the growth that has taken place, much work remains to be done. The interest, involvement and support of progressive organisations is vital if these projects are to become politically viable.

Children..."



"Give them bread not bullets."*

South Africa is one of two countries in the world who refused to adopt the United Nations declaration of children's rights.

The Federation of Transvaal Women adopted the United Nations Declaration of Children's Rights when they started the FEDTRAW Pre-school Project.

"Children need equal education."*

On the 3rd of June this year, women's groups from Soweto, Fordsburg and Eldorado Park brought the declaration of children's rights to their areas.

Women arranged a fun day in all the above areas, where parents and children could participate in activities.

The activities included co-operation games, face painting, music, plays, puppet shows and story telling.

"All children need love."*

In Eldorado Park other progressive community organisations helped to make the day a success.

Within Soweto, Mrs Motsoaledi, a speaker from FEDTRAW addressed the parents on the rights of children in South Africa.

Fordsburg women entertained children from all areas.

At the end of children's day parents were eager to commit themselves to stand up and speak out on the rights of children in South Africa.

Everybody agreed that it was a day for children as well as for parents.

"We love our children."*

(*quotes from parents on Children's Day.)

Making the best out of nothing...

The Apartheid State is in an economic crisis. On one way it is clear to the oppressed majority that the main economic effect of apartheid is the poverty the black people are subject to in a land of great natural wealth.

Women have been part of the struggle for a united community voice on homelessness. One aspect of this issue is displayed by millions of shacks and squatter camps world wide.

Women have fought and are still fighting for adequate housing.

Below is a true story of Polapark squatter camp in the East Rand.

Women are the main movers of East Rand Polapark

Life in a squatter camp is dismal by comparison with even the

poorer South African black township areas. But some of the women in these camps refuse to let the environs get the better of them. Starstyle reporter looks at how they make the best out of nothing.

The ability to keep making something out of nothing is what keeps the women of the East Rand squatter camp, Polapark, going.

Polapark, situated in the township of Thokoza, is a bustling, overpopulated 'city' without the luxury of modern facilities, and is home to over 30 000 people. It is in the process of being declared an 'emergency camp'. Three years ago Polapark experienced a massive housing crisis. It became a human dumping ground with over 70 000 squatters dwelling in backyards, fields, at the back of factories - wherever a shack could be erected.

Many of the camp's occupants are women so it is understandable that they are the key movers in the community. Ms Tunkly Jonas (26), a mother of two, executive member of the Polapark Squatter Camp Committee (PSCC) and head of the women's section says the majority of residents are unemployed, but they are not

content to sit back and let life get the better of them.

A resident since its inception, Ms Jonas says "Jobs are scarce, so the women decided to take control. We all pitched in some money and bought four sewing machines." Regular sewing classes are held, she says, "In this way women will not only earn a little money, but they will also develop skill."

But unemployment is just one of many

units or collect funds for funeral expenses," she says.

But life in the squatter camp means living with the threat of imminent disaster. A five metre deep sewerage trench without any protective fence has been dug around the border of the first row of shacks. "Mothers never live in peace. Our children can fall into the holes, or drown in them when it rains. We want proper homes, but now we have to make do," says Ms Jonas.

WE WILL NOT MOVE



problems, says Ms Jonas. "We are not only fighting for land, but for the right to live decently. Our starting point is getting what many take for granted - water to drink."

When people arrived at Polapark camp, which in Zulu means a 'resting place for free', it was just barren land with no electricity, water or sewerage system. Now there are 20 mobile toilets. Residents have to walk over a kilometre to fetch water from a nearby men's hostel.

"The women are scared of being molested. But we are desperate and we have to take chances," says Ms Jonas. A constant stream of squatters lines up outside the committee's offices, which are located at the entrance of the camp. Says Ms Jonas, "Sometimes a husband and wife have problems, then I have to get legal advice for them, but our biggest problem is hungry people."

The community decided to demarcate 15 zones in the camp each with a soup kitchen. "The women volunteered to cook a meal a day, and everyone saves a little money monthly so that food can be shared," says Ms Jonas. "Squatters pool their resources, whether it's to form patrol

and empty cans sprawled on her bare floor which are used as toys. She looks after 30 children ranging from seven months to seven years, one of whom is mentally retarded. born in the Transkei, Ms Thibedi came to Johannesburg in 1968 and worked as a domestic. "But during the 1970's my boss left the country and I couldn't find a job or a place to live. I lived in a coalyard and moved here three years ago," says Ms Thibedi.

Unemployed and desperate for food, she decided to mind children, says Ms Thibedi. "If women in the camp are to get jobs, they need someone to look after their children, so I help them. They pay me R20 a month to look after each child."

Ms Thibedi tends to the children from 7.30 a.m. to 4.30 p.m. daily, feeding and bathing them. She says "I used to walk four times a day to fetch water from the hostel, but now I have a wheelbarrow and it makes life a lot easier."

A mobile clinic visits the children regularly for health check-ups. But Ms Thibedi's concern for the children goes beyond their health. "I want them to grow up clever, so I teach the alphabet, numbers and rhymes in both Zulu and English."

M r s Christina Thibedi (56), a child-minder and resident of the camp, runs one of the two creches in the camp. The only signs of a creche are the chalk-writings on her tin-walledshack,

Whose elections? Whose vote?

Five years have passed since the establishment of the racist tri-cameral parliament on 1984. At that time the United Democratic Front warned the Nationalist Government that:

*the new parliament would attempt to fracture the unity of the oppressed by co-opting Indians and Coloureds

* and that it would lead to greater bloodshed and violence.

It is clear that the tri-cameral parliament failed miserably to co-opt Indian and Coloured people. The low polls in these elections proved unequivocally that these communities saw their destiny together with the African majority.

But perhaps more serious was the violence and bloodshed that the UDF predicted. As early as September 1984 in the Vaal and continuing well into 1987, mass uprising occurred throughout the length and breadth of the country. The tri-cameral parliament generated more conflict than has ever been witnessed in the history of our country.

The responsibility for the detentions, State of Emergency and killings in the townships falls squarely on all sitting members of parliament: not only Nationalist ministers, but also on each and every White, Coloured and Indian MP.

But there is also a lighter side to the tri-cameral parliament. The House of Delegates has been reduced to a circus. On a daily basis, MPs switch allegiances from one party to another, depending on where its easier to make a quick buck. The most senior Indian minister, Amichand Rajbansi, was fired by P.W. Botha for corruption. On the other hand, the most senior Coloured minister was fired by Botha for swimming at a whites-only beach.

It is clear that the tri-cameral parliament is irrelevant to addressing the key issues and problems facing our country. In fact, the Nats are themselves saying that the tri-cameral parliament should be altered after the September 6 elections.

The essence of the problem, however, is that the September 6 elections are "minority"

elections. The real power in the tri-cameral parliament lies in the House of Assembly and in particular with the Nationalist Government. As long as the majority of people in this country are denied the right to self-determination and access to political power, the problems of the country will remain unsolved.

The message of the Mass Democratic Movement is quite clear: Coloured and Indian people should refuse to vote for a racially based, disastrous political institution. On the other hand, we should intensify the extra-parliamentary struggle to new heights in the pursuit of a united, non-racial and democratic South Africa.



THE FEDERATION OF TRANSVAAL WOMEN REMEMBERS ALL THE FALLEN HEROES WHO DIED FIGHTING FOR THE LIBERATION OF THE OPPRESSED MASSES OF SOUTH AFRICA.

Ruth First: killed on 17th August 1984 in her office at the centre of African Studies in Maputo by a parcel bomb. Severe explosion that completely destroyed her office.

Jeanette Curtis Schoon: A SACTU member, she and her daughter were killed in Lubango, Angola, by a parcel bomb. She was married to Marius Schoon who is also a political exile.

Victoria Mxenge: Four years after she had taken over her husband's legal practice and had herself become a key political activist, she was murdered. She was hacked to death by unknown assailants outside her home. Her death was witnessed by her children and the Rev. Xundu of the UDF who had given her a lift home. He then had to flee Natal for fear of his life. Her killers have to date not been found.

Florence and Fabian Ribero: Were gummed down at 6.30 p.m. on the 1st December 1986 at their Mamelodi home. The Ribero's had always been in constant threat of losing their lives, given their high profile and ceaseless work in the community. Their son Chris said that the gunmen appeared to have "black faces" but as he tried to pull one of the gunmen from the car he saw from the driver's hand that he was a white man. Another witness. Jacob Mampuru was shot and paralised a few hours before the Ribero's funeral.

Dulcie September: Was assassinated at the ANC offices in Paris in March 1988. Belgian police subsequently named a South African sergeant-major Joseph Klus as one of the alleged assassins.

David Webster was assassinated outside his Troyeville home in Johannesburg on the 1st of May at 10.20 a.m. by unidentified men who fired an "expert" shot from a white car, hitting him in the back.

Irene Mkwai: Died on the 16th of December, 1988. She was the wife of Rivonia Trialist Wilton Mkwai, doing life in Pollsmoor Prison. She was a Fedtraw member and was very active in one of our sewing projects.

Ma-Molefe: Died on the 31st January 1989. She was very active in the 1950's, and continued when Fedtraw was formed. She was a known stalwart until illness caught up with her.

Fedtraw salutes all our compatriots and combatants who passed away during this demanding era. We committ ourselves to continue fighting side by side with our men until liberation day when all the exiled will be home and all those convicted for fighting against apartheid will be free.

**FEDTRAW PLEDGES TO PICK UP THEIR SPEARS
WE SAY VICTORY OR DEATH - WE SHALL WIN**

Catholic Women's Desk Consultation Conference.

As far back as 1984 the Catholic Bishops conference discussed the setting up of a women's structure to deal with women's issues and to provide the opportunity to participate and assert their position in the highest body of the church. This structure would also have the task of rousing the political awareness of women, building self-confidence and engaging women in the development of self-reliance.

In October 1987 the women's desk was finally approved by the Administration Board of the Bishops and the Christian Development Education of the Bishops' Conference was mandated to facilitate the setting up of the structure. Through consultation with other various structures within the church, a national consultative conference was convened in Durban 23-25 June 1989. The theme of the conference was "go and Tell" with the keynote address given by Mrs Mosala. The conference affirmed the fact that women too have been created in the image of God and therefore have the responsibility to participate fully in the life of the church and society.

Priorities were set for the Desk, and some of the resolutions that were agreed upon were:

- * the Desk should emphasize the relationship between different Catholic women and other existing women's organisations;

- * priests should be encouraged to work with structures and groups and that women should be given a platform and not be discriminated against in the churches;

- * the church should engage itself in practical action against the apartheid system;

- * the church should recognise national people's holiday e.g. June 16th, 1st May, 9th August, by opening its doors for people on those days;

- * the women's desk should not be seen as a parallel women's structure but should rather re-inforce the existing women's structures like FED-TRAW, NOW, UWCO, by increasing the participation of church women in these structures.

COSAW

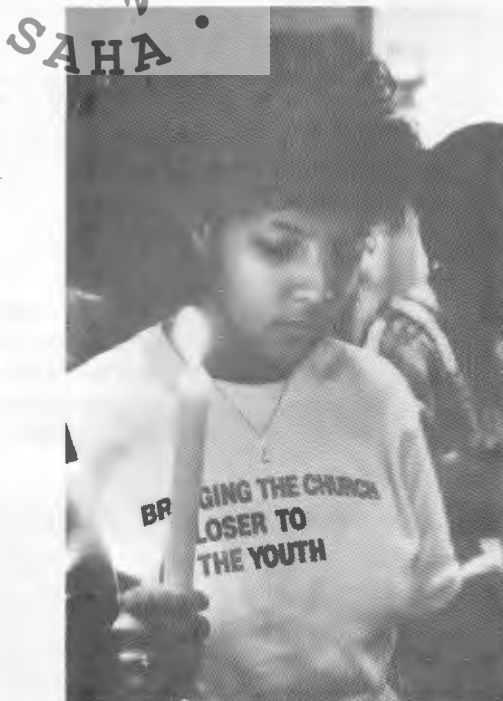
Buang Basadi! was the theme of the 1988 Transvaal Regional AGM of the Congress of South African Writers. This theme was taken up again at COSAW's 1989 National AGM, held in May. COSAW passed a resolution to set up a Women's Forum within COSAW to encourage participation and writing by women. COSAW also agreed to work towards a situation where women had 50% representation on decision making bodies.



Women Against Repression

In March this year the women in the Transvaal embarked on an important initiative. Women from FED-TRAW, Women for Peace, Black Sash, Church Women, working women, students and youth came together to form a broad alliance against repression. This initiative was motivated by the gallant stand taken by detainees in the form of a hunger strike. We believed that we women needed to speak and act with a united voice in solidarity with the hunger strikers.

The women demonstrated outside the Johannesburg prison to demand the release of all detainees. This was followed by an all night vigil on March 7th, which coincided with the 100th day of the State of Emergency and International Women's Day. This, together with other activities undertaken by women is a reflection of this broad unity.



Women of WAR lit candles for detainees at the vigil on 7th March.