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WOMEN'S VOICE

NATAL ORGANISATION OF WOMEN [NOW]

NEWSLETTER



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LETTERS PAGE



In this NOW newsletter we hope to share news, information, ideas and experiences of 1985 between all NOW branches and other interested women's groups in Natal. This newsletter can be used to help build women's organisation and unity in this way.

At the moment, NOW has active branches in Lamontville, Durban Central, KwaMashu, Hambanathi and Pietermaritzburg. Working groups have also been formed in Chesterville, Clermont, Umlazi, Wentworth and Chatsworth. If women unite, first in small groups then in one big organisation, we can be strong and together can fight our oppression.

1985 has been a hard year. Some of our members were detained, some killed and others have had their homes burnt. The cost of living has increased dramatically, and many workers have lost their jobs. But much has also been achieved. Lamontville women fought rent increases and started a literacy group. KwaMashu women have built up their vegetable co-operative. NOW delegates took the message of our women to the world at the United Nations' Women's Conference in Kenya. Women workers have shown their strength and determination to assert their rights as seen in the Spar and King Edward VIII Hospital strikes. The formation of COSATU is opening a new chapter in the history of worker struggles and victories in South Africa.

In 1986 we can take women's struggles further, achieve greater victories and together, show we are a force to be reckoned with!

*There will be a big story on food co-ops in the next issue.

IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO SHARE IDEAS, EXPERIENCES OR STORIES OR WOULD LIKE TO JOIN THE MEDIA GROUP, PLEASE CONTACT

PHUZO : 427344
FIONA : 455862
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OR
WRITE TO US
P.O. BOX 331
VERULEN
4340



Dear Comrades,
In February this year, a group of women in Pietermaritzburg got together to form a local branch of NOW. It has been a year of learning for the new group, much of it spent in discussing the form our branch should take and the paths we should follow to gain support and involve women in the greater Pietermaritzburg area.

Being a young organisation we had to go slow at the beginning. However, we have embarked on several projects to strengthen our branch. A few well-attended meetings at the beginning of 1985 were used to get some idea of the main problems facing women in Pietermaritzburg and an ad hoc working committee was elected. The response to a play and a slide tape show on the women's struggle in South Africa and a talk on contraception held by the branch, gave the working committee some kind of idea of what women locally were interested in.

In July, several NOW members attended a course for teachers of English literacy, given by Learn and Teach, and arranged by the National Education Union of South Africa, Pietermaritzburg.

In August, we held a successful rally to celebrate National Women's Day. We had to postpone our original rally after the death of our friend and comrade, Victoria Mxenge. There were many new faces amongst the crowd. Miriam Mkhize from the Metal and Allied Workers' Union (MAWU) spoke on working women and the need to become involved in their trade union. Helen Joseph gave an inspiring talk on women's struggles. We missed Nozizwe who was due to speak at the rally, but was detained some weeks before. After taking a short post-rally breather, we have begun to take up some of our plans and problems we have identified this year.

We will be taking up two projects. Firstly, several contacts made this year in other areas will be used to set up smaller NOW groups in Pietermaritzburg and surrounding areas. This will make it easier for women in each area to meet and transport problems will be done away with.

Secondly, the members who attended the literacy course in July will now teach other women in the group the skills they have learned. In the new year, we will be launching our literacy project.

Yours in struggle,
NOW - Pietermaritzburg.



Dear Friends,
We are a group of women from Wentworth who are concerned about the growing chaos and unrest in our country. We feel the need to belong to an organisation through which we could work towards change in South Africa.

There are a number of women's groups in Wentworth at present. These are concerned mainly with matters related to the church or with relief or welfare work. We enjoy a good working relationship with them.

We feel that the Natal Organisation of Women is an organisation through which we could work towards better living conditions in South Africa. With this in mind, we have decided to move towards the formation of a branch of NOW in Wentworth.

We hope to have this branch launched officially sometime in February 1986. If anyone living in or near Wentworth is interested in joining us, please contact Jean at 488191.

Yours in struggle,
Jean.

COST OF LIVING

EVERYTHING
INCREASES



While the bosses get rich and fat on our sweat, we are paid peanuts, and even retrenched.



The prices of our food are not determined by the needs of the people but by profits for a few. For example, if there are too many eggs, they will have to sell them cheaply, and their profits will be less.



So, they control the supply of food in various ways:

- they export food at cheaper prices to foreign countries, and keep the prices high within our country, where the government boards protect the farmers and not the consumers.



It is time we learnt what was happening and what we can do,

- our food is used as part of the bribe and threat tactic with neighbouring countries. eg. in the Nkomati accord, they received an assurance that Mozambique would not harbour the ANC; they also gave Mozambique free gifts of food.



- If there are too many oranges for example, the government boards cannot sell them at a high price. So they dump a large quantity of it and sell the rest at prices that ensure they make a profit.



This cannot continue...

* We must begin to educate ourselves about what is happening when they say everything is for the people's benefit, we must ask: which people? the farmers and government boards?



* We must set up our own food co-operatives and bulk-buying schemes to ensure our survival in the meantime.

* We must organise ourselves in all the ways we can.

* We must unite and fight so that it is people's needs, not profit which counts.



NAIROBI CONFERENCE



by Nozizwe Madlala,
NOW Chairperson.

KARIBU KENYA UJUMBE WA WAKIJAMAMA KATIKA
MKUTANO WA UMOJA WA MATAIFA
KUHUSU MWONCO WA WANAWAKE
NAIROBI KENYA 15th - 26th JULY 1985

UNITED NATIONS WOMEN'S CONFERENCE

I have been asked to share with you my experiences at the Nairobi Conference in July. I was extremely excited to get this opportunity as it has been impossible to reach everyone and give a detailed report of what happened at the Conference. I am aware that the mass media (newspapers, TV and radio) did a very bad job to say the least, in keeping you informed about what really did happen in Nairobi. I will try my best to share with you my experiences during these 10 days.



WOMEN WHO CAME TO THE CONFERENCE



10 000 women from all over the world came to the conference. Each country was determined to put their story forward and to share with women from other countries. There was generally a strong feeling of sisterhood. This was so in spite of the fighting that later took place at a number of workshops held by the Israeli and P.L.O. women and also between members of the American delegation.

The American delegation tried very hard during the first two days to de-politicise the conference. They were, together with women from other western countries, pushing that the conference be confined to what they called issues unique to women, leaving broader political considerations aside. This disregarded the fact that womens issues could not be isolated from the broader considerations of employment, education, social status, the freedom to decide to plan their families and equal political rights.

They shouted at the top of their voices "politics should be kept out of womens issues". This angered a great number of women who saw the uselessness of adopting this type of attitude.

PURPOSE OF THE CONFERENCE

The purpose of the conference was to look critically into ways of improving the status of women in the whole world and to look at how much the women had advanced in relation to the themes - peace, equality and development.

WORKSHOPS

FEMINISM

A strong recommendation was made by women from independent countries such as Angola that women's issues should be integrated into the broad liberation movement in order to allow for the greater participation of women and also in order to integrate women into the decision-making process so that they could avoid post liberation lapse and improve their status.



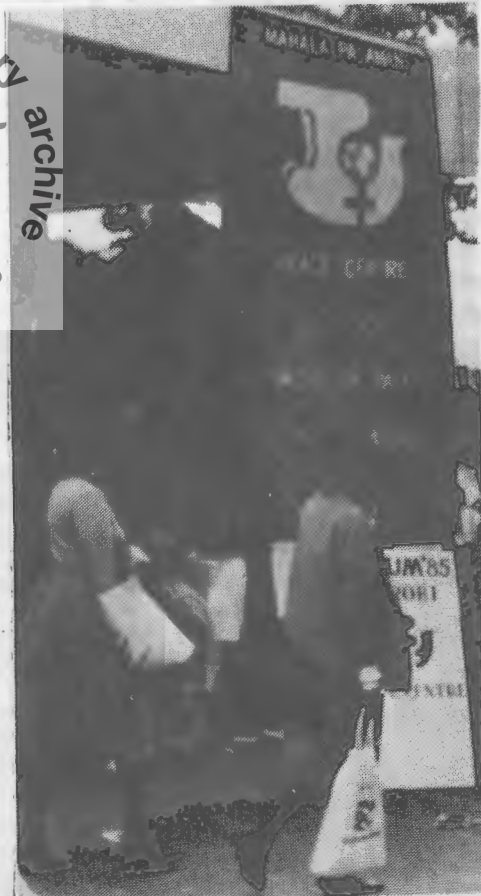
WOMEN IN THE WORKPLACE

The workshops on "working women" highlighted the plight of women in the work place. The World Health Organisation and the International Labour Organisation stressed the need for the transformation of the workplace to make way for a larger number of women. Domestic workers were the main focus. A representative of the South African Domestic Workers Association spoke about the exploitative conditions under which South African women forced other women to work. She gave a moving account of how, while she was working as a domestic worker, found herself under de-humanising conditions. The hours of work were long, she was faced with having to look after the needs of one family whilst her own was uncared for in the rural areas. She also highlighted the fact that because not many women were organised into trade unions, a large number are exploited and are forced to work under terrible conditions. It was also mentioned that trade unions had not focused much on women's issues such as their safety at work, maternity benefits, equal salaries, safe methods of contraception and general health care. Women were therefore advised to actively participate in trade unions and to highlight these issues. The plight of women in the homelands was also highlighted where trade unions are not allowed.



FOREIGN VIOLENCE

Women from Nicaragua gave an account of American invasion into Latin America. This was seen as imperialist domination and was strongly criticised. Attacks by the SADF into neighbouring countries such as Mozambique and Lesotho also came under heavy attack. Another workshop on women refugees also highlighted their plight. A moving account was given by a South African exiled woman who had escaped near death when the house she had been staying with her husband and child was attacked during the SADF raid into Maseru in 1982. She recalled the "two hours of horror" when a number of people were killed, including Basuto people. She said they are under constant fear for their lives.



FUTURE

A strong feeling at the conference was the difficulty of talking about peace, development and equality of women when women in S.A. was still under apartheid, when P.L.O. women in Israel still suffered under racism, etc. Unity with these women was expressed. It was felt that ways should be found so that conditions for peace, development and equality could exist.



These stories were written by Barbara Skeef, a Spar shop steward and CCAWUSA Branch Executive Committee member.

UNION WOMEN

Women are half of the world's population. They are a third of the official labour force. They put in two thirds of all the hours worked. They get a tenth of the world's income. They own less than one hundredth of the world's property. [United Nations 1980]

COSATU

The birth of the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) is a great stride in the struggle of the working class in South Africa. COSATU will add more strength to the voice of the workers.

During the launch one witnessed an exceptional enthusiasm and determination on the part of the workers which was displayed by their chanting and singing of freedom songs. One interesting feature which came out very clearly at the launch is the balance of leadership drawn from unions of different political inclinations. All the differences were seen to be buried during the discussions and debates. Many resolutions were adopted calling on the government to dismantle apartheid and create an atmosphere of a new democratic South Africa. A call was

made for the government to end exploitation and start designing a system of sharing the wealth of the country with those who work it. Though no women were elected to hold key positions in the new federation, women's issues were top on the agenda during the launch. A resolution supporting women's rights and also calling for an end to women's exploitation was unanimously passed.

It was noted that women workers suffer sexual harassment and unequal pay. Women lose their jobs when they become pregnant and have to work under conditions harmful both to their babies and to themselves. Women at COSATU have resolved to fight all types of discrimination meted out to them; for full maternity rights and child care facilities, and to negotiate agreements wherever possible as part of this campaign for women's rights.

The fact that women were not elected into leadership positions poses a challenge to women workers to ensure that women play an effective and important role in advancing the workers' struggle. The time has come for women to begin playing a major role in the structures of the new federation, so as to promote the necessary confidence amongst women workers. So, to all women I say: Vukani Makosikazi!



SPAR

The workers at Spar had had enough of the low wages, bad treatment and unfair dismissals meted out by management. After we had organised ourselves in the Commercial, Catering and Allied Workers' Union (Ccawusa), we felt that we were united enough to stand up for our rights.

On 7 December 1984, workers from nine Spar stores around Durban and Pietermaritzburg decided to down

tools demanding:

- *A R80 increase across the board
- *Recognition of our union
- *Re-instatement of two colleagues.

Management refused to listen to the voice of the workers, and a total of 150 workers were dismissed the following day.

That, however was not the end. The struggle for trade union rights, and the fight against exploitation of workers continued for six months. After a series of meetings, the dispute was settled. The workers would all be re-employed at the same salary. Twenty workers would be re-employed every month for

four months, bringing the total to 80. Thereafter workers would be guaranteed to be taken back by the end of February.

In the interim, workers together with union officials have started negotiations for a recognition agreement.

The Spar struggle has won not only the respect of management, but women have played a great role in achieving the aspirations of the workers. Women have picketed stores and stood up to management concerning unhealthy working conditions, despite the restrictions placed on women workers.

MARY'S STORY

I am employed as a "non-classified worker" at King Edward VIII Hospital. I am a mother of three children. My husband works in a factory in Durban. We live in Lamontville. I would like to tell the story of our strike at King Edward Hospital at the beginning of this year.

Some of the people I work with have a service of 10 to 30 years. Our wages are very low, averaging about R230 per month. These salaries are not enough to cover the high rents, food prices, bus fares and the education of our children among other things.

Because of all these problems we had tried several times to negotiate with the employers for better salaries and working conditions. The talks with the administration brought little or no improvement.

We had been offered an increase of R13. For all the workers this was like a drop in the ocean. We therefore decided to reject this offer and go on strike. We took this decision in the face of the harsh repressive conditions of hospital work where strikes are illegal. We are denied trade union rights. However, this has not prevented us from building organisation. We believe that it is through a strong united workforce that our struggle for better wages and working conditions can be won.

We started organising other workers and at the beginning of 1983 formed the Health and Allied Workers' Union, an affiliate of the National Federation of Workers (NFW).

workshop and ward messengers refused to carry out any instructions. At about 8.45am on that day, the superintendent assembled all workers and wanted to know why we were on strike. We demanded to see the Director of Hospital Services. We refused to negotiate with the superintendent as previous talks with him had been useless.

The Director of Hospital Services, Dr Vorster arrived at 12 o'clock to address us. However, he failed to satisfy us and instead made us even more angry as his attitude was very arrogant. He asked us why we wanted the money and also where we thought the money came from. He also said he was the Director of Hospitals and not supermarkets, and therefore did not have control of prices. He then went to Wentworth Hospital where he told them the same thing. The workers therefore decided to continue the strike until the demands had been met.

By 2.30pm the hospital was in chaos. Nursing staff were made to do our work. On the second day, the superintendent tried to intimidate us to go back to work, but we were adamant that we would only go back when the demands had been met.

The workers at Wentworth and RK Khan had also decided on a work stoppage. The organisation at RK Khan was relatively good but management was able to frighten the workers to go back to work. Their stoppage lasted until 10am. When attempts to force us back to work had failed, the police



Mary [4th from the left] and friends from King Edward.

saw the need to organise workers not only at King Edward Hospital, but also at other NPA hospitals such as RK Khan, Wentworth and Clairwood Hospitals.

By October 1984, we had managed to get a membership of about 200. This was very small in comparison to the potential of about 800 workers. This was because we were organising under very difficult conditions. There was open intimidation of workers by the administration who made their presence felt by sending senior security guards to monitor our meetings. Workers at the hospital could not even meet.

What actually happened to unite and strengthen our members was the boycott of the 1984 Christmas party at King Edward and Wentworth Hospitals. This party was given by the administration to show the "good relations" they had with the "non-classified" workers. We felt this to be an insult on us especially since our children were made to starve the whole year. We had nothing to celebrate.

After the Christmas party boycott, we felt encouraged to go ahead with our fight for better wages. Between mid-December and January, organisation at various hospitals, particularly at King Edward Hospital, intensified. On February 2 1985 we met and decided that on February 4 we would stop work until the Director of Hospital Services of the NPA had met with our representatives. We demanded a R100 increase for all workers.

On February 4 everybody stopped work. All non-classified staff, domestic workers, porters, junior security workers,

were called in on 7 February. The police were armed with guns, batons, dogs and teargas. With the police to back him, the superintendent again called on us to return to work. When we did not heed the call, the police then baton-charged and arrested us. After we were arrested, mass meetings were called by sympathetic staff and medical students. The students even organised a demonstration for which they were banned from the wards by the superintendent.

Meanwhile, the workers' committee met Dr Clarke in Pietermaritzburg. After lengthy negotiations, an agreement was reached which included a 20% increase in salaries and unconditional reinstatement of all workers; all charges had to be withdrawn against the workers and it was agreed that the workers would return to work on Monday 11 February.

On the whole, the strike was a success in that the workers were made aware of their potential. We gained confidence in ourselves. The salary increase was not much. We are still very much underpaid but at least we are aware of our power when united.

As women workers we still have a hard battle to fight for equal and living wages, for maternity benefits, safe working conditions etc. We realise that our united action will help us in this steep uphill battle. Over and above our fight at the workplace, we realise that our struggle for a better living wage, better working conditions and so on, go hand in hand with our struggle for political freedom. Unity is strength. Amandla!

WOMEN TOGETHER



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SHARING, CARING,

FIGHTING!

N.O.W. NEWS



NOW & THE DURBAN CRISIS

N.O.W. suffered a very big setback after the murder of its executive member Victoria Mxenge. During the months following her brutal murder, the houses of about 10 N.O.W. members were burnt or petrol bombed. Many other members had to leave their homes and live elsewhere because they were threatened. Because of this crisis many members lost their jobs. Our chairperson, Nozizwe, was detained during this troubled period. As a result of this situation, N.O.W. decided to call off its National Women's Day rally on August 9. All our energies were

then spent on responding to this deepened crisis facing us in Durban and especially to our members. N.O.W., together with the Crisis Committee of Durban, formed at the initiative of UDF (Natal), responded to the basic needs of people who had lost their homes and possessions or who had to leave their homes. Money, clothes and groceries were collected for the affected people and we tried to find accommodation for the homeless. We provided moral support and discussed ways and means of ensuring people's safety during the crisis situation.

The Crisis Committee tried to give legal protection to anyone assaulted by the security police or their puppets. The Legal Resources Centre assisted in this matter as well as in the application for Nozizwe's release from detention. N.O.W. believes that such crisis situations will occur again and that we should prepare ourselves so that we are not completely helpless during these times. The recent experience has taught us that if we are well organised and if we stand together, we can respond and challenge such situations quickly and effectively.



NOW FIGHTS ILLITERACY

In May 1985, N.O.W. members attended a very successful literacy workshop. This workshop was conducted by LEARN and TEACH, a literacy organisation based in Johannesburg.

N.O.W. recognises the importance of people being able to read and write in both English and Zulu. It is a well-known fact that over 50% of the women in our country can-

not read or write. This leads to women not being able to control their own lives.

All the N.O.W. members that attended the workshop saw the importance of setting up literacy groups wherever possible. The Lamontville Branch of N.O.W. has started to set up learning groups in their area.

A literacy sub-committee of



N.O.W. has also been formed. It is presently collecting learning material that would be of interest to women. If anyone is interested in working with the literacy sub-committee, please contact one of the members through the N.O.W. address (P.O. Box 331, Verulam 4340). Anyone who wishes to become a literacy co-ordinator, i.e. teachers, could also contact the Literacy Sub-Committee.

NOW SUPPORTS COSATU

Comrades,

The Natal Organisation of Women conveys its support for, and solidarity with the Congress of South African Trade Unions [COSATU] on its formation.

The joining together of trade unions in one united, strong body is an important development in our struggle against exploitation and

oppression.

We recognise that it is only through strong organisation that we will build a better society. Our organisation hopes to work with COSATU in the future on the problems facing working women [such as childcare, health, maternity benefits etc].

We in NOW call on women to become more involved in their

trade unions at all levels [on the factory floor, shop steward councils, branch executive committees, national executive committees etc]. This involvement will contribute to the strength of the trade unions as well as ensure that the voice of the working women is heard.

Yours in struggle,

NOW



NOW'S PROGRAMME

NOW is trying to reach out to as many women as possible, from all race groups. Recently, NOW has established contact with groups from a number of areas such as

Botha's Hill, Tongaat Farm, Malakazi and Kwandengezi. Through discussions with these women, we found that many women experience similar problems.



We hope that by continuous meetings with these groups, we would be able to build unity among them and thus strengthen the struggle for better living conditions.

CONTRACEPTION SURVEY

The Durban and Districts branch of N.O.W. spoke to the Sydenham Womens keep fit group and found that they had many complaints with contraception. Together we decided to work out

some questions for a survey that could help us find out lots more, about all the women in Sydenham and their problems.

This is an ongoing project which will continue into 1986. We hope to

make a SLIDE TAPE SHOW with the Sydenham women, which can also be used with other womens groups.

If you are interested in the project or want to write us your problems, please do so.

LAMONTVILLE



LET US DECIDE



"RENTS WE CAN AFFORD". This is the cry of the residents of Lamontville. When the P.N.A.B. increased rents without consulting the residents, the community protested about this.

The question many residents ask at the community meetings is: "Why does the P.N.A.B. not consult us about issues affecting OUR lives?" We are not interested in the 99 year lease plan since we believe that this is just a plan to shift away the responsibility of the P.N.A.B. to repair and improve our homes.

We are also not willing to become incorporated into KWAZULU since this will lead to even more hunger and poverty, and will not solve our daily problems.

The Lamontville branch of NOW has been working with other organisations in the area to challenge issues such as rent hikes, incorporation into KwaZulu, the police presence in the township etc.

The articles below have been written by members of the Lamontville branch to briefly explain the nature of the problems facing them.

POLICE ARE NOT OUR PROTECTORS

Before the police camp had been set up in Lamontville, residents had many complaints about them. This was because the police had attacked and injured many students at the local high school even though they had not been boycotting.

"The Camp must be removed", says the community. Residents are having many problems since their arrival. Although this is the international year of the youth, many of our youth are being beaten with sjamboks or killed by bullets even when they are walking around normally in groups. We, the residents of Lamontville, feel that the police are disturbing the community and not maintaining order as they claim to be doing.

How can they be maintaining order when soon after the camp had been set up :-

1. An old man was beaten in his home, in the presence of his children, without any reason.
2. A young man was shot in the eye whilst standing outside his house.
3. Plainclothed men walk around at night wearing balaclavas and carrying guns.
4. Individual policemen have allegedly attempted to rape young girls.

Can we then call the police our protectors?



Two women approach the police camp to protest against the shooting of the youth with them.

MAMELODI WOMEN MARCH

On Tuesday, 19 November, 12 000 women packed the YMCA Hall in Pretoria to protest against the presence of police and troops in the townships, and against the increase in the rentals.

At that meeting, they decided that they would lead a march to the authorities to lodge their protest. The protest march was held two days later. It drew a crowd of over 50 000 people, mostly women. It was a peaceful march until the protestors reached their destination. The police and soldiers who were monitoring the march, then fired upon the crowd. The brutal action of the security forces led to the death of 13 people and a massive outcry by people in South Africa and internationally.

The funeral for the 13 who were massacred was held on 3 December. It was attended by over 60 000 people, and resulted in a 90% stayaway from work in Pretoria. At the funeral, Martha Mahlangu (mother of ANC guerilla, Solomen Mahlangu), who had been part of the march, told the crowd that, "Unarmed women had gone to the authorities to discuss a peaceful issue, but had been mercilessly mowed down without uttering a word." She also appealed for unity "among the mothers of the country."

This form of action, once again, indicates to us that women are no longer going to remain silent over issues affecting their livelihood.



WOMENS RESISTANCE CONTINUES!

CROSSROADS WOMEN



"And when they come to demolish Crossroads, what will the women do? We are not going to move here in Crossroads. We are going to stay and build our houses again. They can take guns and shoot us... We are not prepared to move. We don't want to move."

CHALLENGE POLICE

Police and members of the SADF raided the Crossroads squatter camp three times within the first week of December.

The community was completely surrounded by soldiers during these raids.

After the raid of 3 December, about 140 men were arrested.

About 200 Crossroads women, outraged by the manner of the arrests, marched three kilometres to the Guguletu police station demanding the release of those arrested. Police subsequently released 117 of the men.

The local newspaper in Cape Town was not allowed to publish pictures of the women marching and waiting at the police station.

Women residents spoke of extremely crude and humiliating action by police during their house searches. Several women said policemen who raided their homes while families were having breakfast had snatched food from their plates and eaten it.

This form of intimidation by the police cannot be allowed to continue!



COMRADE

FLORENCE

MKHIZE

remove the Pass Laws from the statute books, through this march we were able to make our protest known to the people of South Africa and the rest of the world.

However, we continued our resistance to the introduction of the Pass Laws after that famous march.

In 1957 we led a protest march to the Native Commissioner of Pietermaritzburg, but our delegation was unable to officially forward the demands of the women because we were arrested in front of the Commissioner's Office.

Then in 1958, we launched a boycott against the beer halls. The boycott was very successful because it was something the majority of women were against. When the ANC was banned in 1960, I was detained together with a large number of other comrades, and released after about a year with a five year banning order which was re-imposed in 1968.

Then in 1962, the women continued their protest against the Pass Laws, and in the rural areas focussed their struggle against the dipping tanks for cattle.

In 1980, I was banned again until July this year. I believe that the struggle for our liberation has gained much ground, and that I will continue fighting until death, till meaningful liberation has been won.

★ Florence Mkhize was elected onto the National Executive Committee of the FSAW soon after the march of August, 1956.

"I WILL FIGHT UNTIL DEATH"

I was born in 1936 in the Umlazi area. My introduction to active political life began during the period of the 1950's under the banner of the ANC. I also joined the Natal region's ANC Women's League of which Dorothy Nyembe was chairperson.

During the introduction of the Bantu Education Act, we in the Women's League organised cultural schools in Cato Manor as an alternative to the schools of the apartheid state. We were supported by many parents in our attempts.

On August 9, 1956 we led the women of Natal on the now famous march to the Union Building in Pretoria, to protest against the extension of Pass Laws to African women. This march was co-ordinated and organised by the Federation of South African Women [FEDSAW]. Although we were unable to



WOMEN LEADERS



VICTORIA MXENGE

This year National Women's Day was not celebrated in Durban. This was because we were saddened by the assassination of our sister, Victoria Mxenge only a week before.

She was a tireless fighter for justice. Victoria was an executive member of NOW and in this capacity, she devoted much energy and time in struggling for women's freedom in South Africa.

Victoria was also an executive member of the UDF, and as a lawyer, she defended many victims of apartheid. At the time of her death, Victoria was involved in the defence of the

Treason Trialists.

Victoria recognised that she was one of the few black women who managed to overcome some of the barriers facing women. It was for this reason that she devoted herself to the fight to remove these barriers which keep women in an inferior position.

Victoria's participation was made possible by her continual struggle with these barriers. Her involvement added strength to the national democratic struggle. This should inspire us to fight the barriers which face women today.

“After I became a shop steward we had excessive meetings, maybe twice a week. We’d have these meetings after work. My husband got very unhappy and thought I was making excuses about meetings when I was going out jolling. When we got dismissed it was worse because he felt I deserved it.

You know what husbands are like. He’d complain that I didn’t do anything - cook, make tea or do washing for him. It’s true that I preferred to do the washing at night rather than missing a meeting. I’d rather strain and overwork at night to satisfy him. But he was not too happy. He needed me to be with him. But he couldn’t put me off because I felt it was important to carry on. Now he’s got used to it and he doesn’t worry me so much. That’s the problem with married women in the organisation. You’re in the middle and don’t know what to do. Even at work if you think of the problems at home you don’t concentrate.”

[Mama Lydia, a union organiser]

Yes, there will be springs,
 where little children of Soweto, KwaNdengezi,
 Mamelodi, KwaMashu, Langa, Athlone,
 can drink, wash or just simply Splash,
 and like tadpoles, freely swim
 on all June sixteens :o come.

(Poem read out by the South African women at the U.N. Women’s Conference in Nairobi.)



MOTHER, WOMAN

Mother, woman:
 Walk and raise your fist,
 Affirm your desire to be free.
 You are soil. You are sap.
 You are strength. You are work.
 Thus you are life.
 In the fields,
 In the factories,
 In the home,
 You have the truth of your strength
 From your life-giving bosom.
 Don’t walk three yards behind
 Your comrade and the Revolution,
 Walk in front of them.
 It’s your place by right.
 And when they want to exploit,
 prostitute, violate your naked body,
 refuse them,
 fighting, refuse them.
 Mother, woman: the Revolution is you.
 [Mozambique]



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