

malibongwe
praise be
igama
to women
lamakhosikasi

REMEMBERING THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN SOUTH AFRICAN HISTORY THROUGH DIALOGUE



| DIALOGUE |
FOR JUSTICE



Wathint' abafazi, wathint' imbokodo uzo kufa!



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The text in this booklet is an edited version of the Malibongwe dialogue, which took place on May 30 2007 at the Nelson Mandela Foundation.

Special thanks to the Apartheid Museum, the curators of the Malibongwe Exhibition, featuring portraits of veteran women activists by Gisèle Wulfsohn.

FOREWORD

ACHMAT DANGOR

CEO, Nelson Mandela Foundation

The Nelson Mandela Foundation (NMF) seeks to contribute to a just society by promoting the vision and work of its Founder and convening dialogue around critical social issues.

Our Founder, Nelson Mandela, based his entire life on the principle of dialogue, the art of listening and speaking to others; it is also the art of getting others to listen and speak to each other. Drawing on the contribution that he, his colleagues and comrades made toward creating our fledgling democracy, the NMF's Centre of Memory and Dialogue encourages people to enter into dialogue – often about difficult subjects – in order to address the challenges we face today. The Centre provides the historic resources and a safe, non-partisan space, physically and intellectually, where open and frank discourse can take place.

The *Malibongwe* dialogue, with and about

stalwarts of the struggle for freedom, and the role that women played during those difficult, and often truly dark years, achieved a remarkable level of candour, unmindful of organisational or ideological loyalties. The critique of latter day South Africa, its achievements and failures, was characterised by robust debate, honest, yet without rancour.

The panellists shared their rich histories, the lessons they have learned over the years, their hopes for our country and regrets for the things not done, with an inter-generational audience, which responded with equal openness.

I trust you will find as much pleasure in reading this record of those exchanges as much as we in the Foundation have had in compiling it.



INTRODUCTION

MOTHOMANG DIAHO

Head: Dialogue for Justice Programme – Nelson Mandela Centre of Memory and Dialogue

The Nelson Mandela Foundation, in partnership with the Nelson Mandela Children's Fund, hosted the *Malibongwe* dialogue to highlight the continuing struggle for gender equality and to act as a catalyst to encourage action on issues raised.

It was also an opportunity to salute all women who have struggled against inequality. We need to ensure that the struggles of the past were not waged in vain.

The organisers were spurred by a call by Deputy President Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka on International Women's Day, March 8 2007. The dialogue featured some of the valiant women from the struggle alongside a new generation of women engaged in continuing the struggle for justice today.

Those brave efforts by South African women remain fresh in our memory, giving rationale to the Centre of Memory and Dialogue's proposition to host both an exhibition (initially displayed at the Apartheid Museum) depicting women's struggles, and to share these experiences with the generations after them.

This exhibition and dialogue established a connection between those past struggles and the efforts of women today, while not forgetting the role of men. It is hoped that the dialogue gave a renewed sense of urgency to various initiatives aimed at bringing the country closer to gender equality.



WELCOME

VERNE HARRIS

Head: Memory for Justice Programme – Nelson Mandela Centre of Memory and Dialogue

With the Centre of Memory and Dialogue steadily being put in place, we are aiming at two primary audiences: on the one hand a global audience, which has access to cutting-edge technologies, and on the other, systemically disadvantaged communities here in South Africa.

Some of you might have seen our comic series, which is aimed at young people. Our exhibitions are aimed at reaching people who don't have access to internet, transport to big centres and so on. We're hoping that all our exhibitions will then travel to centres which are accessible to people.

One of the big advantages of starting the life of an exhibition here is that it gives us an opportunity to consult with Madiba as we put it together and in the many consultations we've had with him, fundamental guidelines have emerged. On the one hand he's made it very clear that he doesn't want the Centre to focus on him as an individual, but that he was part of a collective leadership and that there are many, many voices which are not being recognised and given space. The Centre should seek to pay particular attention to finding those hidden voices and histories.

Another equally important guideline is that Madiba has said that he doesn't want us to sanitise history. In other words, it's warts and all. And I think these two values are going to stand us in good stead moving forward. I hope you would agree with me that the *Malibongwe* exhibition exemplifies those two values.



SIBONGILE MKHABELA


Chief Executive of the Nelson Mandela Children's Fund

The *Malibongwe* exhibition captures the history of women's struggles. The march by 20 000 women to the Union Buildings on August 9, 1956, represents the highest point of those struggles. We are honoured that some of those women leaders of the march are here with us to share that celebrated story of strength, determination and defiance.

Few people had expected or prepared for such militancy. Even the then African National Congress (ANC) general secretary Walter Sisulu asked: "How could they dare?" This is the calibre of women who loved their husbands, cared for their children and defended their families. Four years after the start of the women's campaigns, growing support from the men in the ANC was reflected in a special banner they held aloft at the organisation's 1959 December annual conference: "*Makabogwe Amakhosikazi* – We thank the ladies." It is a fitting tribute that women's participation in the struggle for a normal society is now honoured on August 9, National Women's Day.

A symbolic march to the Union Buildings took place in 2006 to mark the 50th anniversary. Present were Deputy President Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, Mrs Graça Machel, and Gauteng Premier Mbazima Shilowa. If Moses Mabhida, then a Congress of South African Trade Union executive who commended the women's action, were still alive, he would probably have relished the sight of Shilowa as evidence of transformed men's attitude in support of the advancement of the status of women. Such transformation of men's attitudes is further punctuated by the presence of men in this dialogue. The challenge, however, is to transform this attitude within our private spaces.

Like the men at the 1959 conference, through this exhibition and dialogue, we say: "*Makabongwe Amakhosikazi*". Loosely translated from IsiZulu this means, "Let the contribution of women be acknowledged." *Malibongwe igama lamakhosikazi* means the same. On that note, I now formally declare the *Malibongwe* Dialogue open for your participation.



in this
journey,
you cannot
be alone

BRIGALIA

NTOMBEMHLOPE BAM

Thank you very much for getting us all together. I would like to thank those who put the *Malibongwe* exhibition together for their wonderful effort.

Thank you, also, for giving us this chance to tell our stories. It is important to interact with younger women, to share our stories.

Last week I attended a memorial service of a colleague of mine, Sophie Mazibuko. She was a social worker and worked for the South African Council of Churches (SACC).

Some of you will know of this organisation as it was very active during the 1970s and 80s, when a number of other organisations were banned. It was through the SACC that families of political prisoners were given support. Sophie knew the families of every detainee.

I am sharing this story with you because I now realise that we have not recorded anything about what Sophie and her colleagues had done.

Sophie knew the families of every prisoner that was on Robben Island. She knew where they came from, and kept very accurate files, which had to be hidden in case of police raids. Families of ex-political prisoners were given monthly grants, because they were discriminated against in the labour market.

I say this because I now realise how important it is for us to record the history, memories and the activities of women during the struggle. I made a vow after her death that I would write about the contribution of this wonderful woman and of the SACC.

One of the greatest things about the past was that because of the deprivation of information and knowledge, we relied on reading.

I want to encourage you, our daughters, in spite of your busy schedules, to cultivate the discipline of reading. Information and knowledge is very powerful.

We took care of each other. The journey of life



thank
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chance to
celebrate
our lives
and also
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stories



in the struggle cannot be undertaken alone. We organised events without emails. We did not even have phones. We kept in touch and communicated on a personal level.

People often ask, “What sustained the women of the past?” We were sustained by our common values, which bound us together and gave us the basis for our spirituality, which motivated and inspired us.

We also took care of ourselves. Women are always the care-givers, and at times, they neglect themselves. What also kept us together was networking with one another, and the knowledge that in this journey, you can’t be alone. The deprivation and the repression brought us closer.

People used to say they were coming to “borrow” things. That’s how we lived, sharing everything. We shared food, we shared everything, and that’s very important. Sharing helped us to build our communities.

Maybe we are living in a society now that is different, but I want to say to you, we knew everybody, we cared for people.

You had to know who your neighbours were, you had to know who was poor, you had to know who was imprisoned.

Nobody talked about *ubuntu* as a concept – it was a way of life. And it was *ubuntu* that sustained us. We were able to retain the values of caring for others that our parents passed on to us.

Certainly, values have changed, morality and ethics have changed, but there were certain things that people did not do. *Zikhona izinto nje, ezingenziwayo*. (“You don’t have to reason, you don’t have to debate, it’s a way of life.”) And that’s what we have tried to pass on to you, our daughters, today, how to keep those values, so that there is a legacy we leave behind.

Thina ukuthi sinishiye ngelegacy yevalues nani ke ize nibenazo ezo-values. (“Now we have left you this legacy of values, you, too, ought to practise them.”)

I think today you are what you are because we had to sacrifice; we had to make sure that you inherited, in the midst of the struggle, the things we left behind for you.

Thank you for giving us a chance to celebrate our lives; it’s important to celebrate with you.

Sharing like this, through this dialogue, is one of the only methods of communicating our experiences to you – you will not find these memories in any textbook.

Enkosi – thank you.

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SOPHIA WILLIAMS-DE BRUYN

Malibongwe, thank you very much. I always look forward to being in the company of young women, as well as those who are in my own age group. I think we can help one another, we can share our experiences with one another.

My experience fits into various stages. The early 50s and early 60s was the march, the Congress movement, the Congress of the People; the late 60s, 70s and 80s was exile and then there was coming home in the 90s, and up to this time.

In the 50s, we were involved in organising the march with both my colleagues here, Bertha Gxowa (she used to be Bertha Mashaba before, and I was her bridesmaid when she got married), and Amina Cachalia, as well as those who are not with us anymore, and a large number of women, scattered wide and far, and who are still alive, but who are very frail and old today. But they are still alive and can also talk about the demonstration against passes in 1956.

Brigalia spoke about unity amongst women. Indeed, for us there was great unity, in the Federation of South African Women, under whose umbrella the march was organised. The march was not organised by the ANC Women's League of that time which is often a wrong notion. The fact is that the ANC Women's League was affiliated to the Federation of South African Women, like all the other affiliates.

I used to visit Amina in her flat at times, she was bedridden and not allowed, by doctor's orders, to exert herself as she was pregnant and there was an imminent possibility of her losing her baby, so she had to go *hamba kahle* (go easy). So we've come a long way with comrades

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and friends, and I'm happy and grateful that we are still together today, and that we support one another in our own old age and frailty.

So the "Great March" was perhaps the highlight of my life. People always ask us, "How did you do it?" Because they know, and we know better, that there were no resources during that time. No money, no resources, we didn't even have telephones to communicate with one another, to pass on strategies to one another, and there was no money to do the things that such a massive organisation and mobilisation campaign required. But we marched, 20 000 women.

Now 20 000 women is small in comparison to today's numbers. You know yourselves that when we have rallies nowadays, the people that turn up at the stadiums are over 80 000, or 40 000. But this 20 000 women for us was a great number, it was a huge number, it was a volume of women. But we know, Ma Bertha, you I, and Amina, we know that there were more than 20 000, but the documented number was 20 000. The number was lower than it might have been because there were those who were late, and were misdirected, they were turned back, they were slapped, some of them were locked up on the eve of the day and only released in the evening, just so that they couldn't be part of that march. So we know that it would have been more than 20 000. Women came from Port Elizabeth, they

came from the Free State, they came from Natal and so on, and from the Transvaal. We didn't have the nine provinces, we had the old provinces at that time. But this march culminated from the previous march of women in the Transvaal, where we mustered 2 000 women.

Women in the other provinces said: "If the

the ANC leadership of the time had not recognised women

Transvaal women can do it, why can't we all be part of the march?" And so they rallied and organised and mobilised themselves in their different provinces.

The Eastern Cape women came from Port Elizabeth and hired two coaches which cost them £90 Sterling. Where did that £90 Sterling come from, who was the kind donor? It was nobody else but the women themselves. And how did they raise that £90 Sterling? They went to their branch meetings and over a period of time, they would make tea and they would have baked scones, the humble scone, and would sell them to one another in their meetings. Others would slaughter their own chickens and cook them into a curry or a stew, and sell this with mealie-rice or pap, to one another. Some would crochet, some would knit, some would sell clothing, and so they raised funds to come to the Union Buildings. In the different provinces the women did various things, but from what I know, in the Eastern Cape, this is how they did it.

We are also asked if we did not worry that these women might let us down? Were we assured that the women would come, how did we know that there would be 20 000 women there?

Yes, we felt apprehensive. We wondered if we had been too ambitious to think 20 000 women would come. But we became more comfortable on the eve of 9th August, when women descended on the ANC Headquarters, in Market Street in Johannesburg. There, in the midst of a great frenzy, our comrades, Mosie Moolla, Abdulla Jassat and Ebrahiem Moolla, from the Transvaal Indian Youth Congress, with the help of comrade Kathrada (Kathy), assisted us to hurriedly organise blankets and mattresses, provided by the Indian merchants around the city centre. This was already a sign that assured us.

The second indication was on the following day of 9th August, when we – Helen Joseph, Lilian Ngoyi and myself – were on our way in Helen's car to the Union Buildings, with Helen at the wheel, and we passed the George Gogh railway track. We saw women in black, green and gold attire in the railway carriages, singing freedom songs. We felt extremely excited and relieved.

But the truth dawned on us when we arrived at the Union Buildings, where we were confronted with a multitude of women that were already there, with their petitions in their hands.

You know, sometimes, we reminisce and we look back at that time and compare it to the times of today. As Brigalia has said, lifestyles and values are changing. Yes, the women of that time had great values: respect, discipline, dignity and commitment.



I mention discipline, because when we arrived at the Union Buildings, the women were standing in a great group. They saw us and we chatted to them for a while. When it was time to walk up the steps, Lilian announced to the women: “Now it’s time for us to start marching up to the Union Buildings.” They just separated themselves and opened up a path. There was no need for us to say, “Excuse, excuse me, let me pass.” They just opened up a path by themselves for the leaders to head up the march, and the other women followed behind.

And they marched up those steps, dignified, gracious and proud. Some had babies on their backs. They had, what we call today, their “scaftins” (lunchboxes), they depended on nobody for anything. They didn’t say, “Are we going to be provided with lunch?” No, they depended on themselves. They were disciplined enough to know that they should pack something in their

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“scaftin” in order to sustain themselves, no matter how meager it was. One of the participants, asked Mam’ Bertha and I, on our way into the auditorium today, “How did they come? Did they come over a period of days, how did they come, when did they arrive?” And we said to them, that some came during that day and overnight. The ANC headquarters was in Johannesburg in the basement. The coloured Congress and

African National Congress had very little money to run our organisation. I was an organiser and worked from a section of the basement hall.

Late Comrade Tom Nkobi occupied another portion of the basement and worked from there as the national organiser of the African National Congress. The Transvaal Indian Congress was given this place to operate from, they had an office of their own in the basement. We carried out all functions and operations with the assistance of the Transvaal Indian Congress. Some of the Indian merchants were willing to give in kind, but did not necessarily want



to associate themselves with the Congress. They didn't want it to be known that they were assisting this liberation movement or the African National Congress, and would rather give in cash or kind.

So, our Indian comrades shared everything with us, like office space, Roneo machines, paper, Imperial typewriters, stencils, etc, and sometimes cash to carry out our operations when we were short.

Mam' Bertha was telling the other ladies, outside the auditorium, that when we wanted, say, to inform five branches about something, then we would have five sheets of paper and have carbon paper inter-layered in the paper. So you'd handwrite everything about the notification of whatever. The other way we used to do it was with the old "squeegee".

We used to wait for Dr Essop Jassat, who was a medical student at Wits University – he was the expert in sign-writing. He had beautiful handwriting. Together with the late Babbla Salloogie, Abdullah Jassat, Herbie Naidoo, Mosie Moolla and sometimes Amina, we would prepare everything for Dr Jassat. He would come straight from Wits, to find us and everything ready. The discipline that you spoke about, Brigalia, was there in our unity of purpose. We co-operated and worked in harmony, all putting our hands to the wheel, together, roneoing-duplicating, and pressing the letters on reams of paper with the old-fashioned "squeegee", thus preparing the hundreds of leaflets we needed.

All of us, the youth of that time, and those that were still at school like Essop Pahad, and Aziz, they would come from high school, and some of my friends would come from the factories, and we would all prepare the leaflets. We'd put the pages on the table and we would collate them, passing on to one another, until the last one, who would staple it. Then there would be thousands of leaflets that still needed to be distributed. The word "deployment" was not part of our vocabulary. Everyone's contribution counted; no-one was more important than the other. The commitment and discipline were equally appreciated.

The great march took place; Strijdom ran away from us, and the women felt very jubilant. The ANC leadership of the time had not recognised women. The hierarchy kept a very low profile about this march and didn't talk much about it. It was only the late Robert Resha, and the Transvaal Indian Congress Youth and comrade Kathy that gave a lot of assistance. But we carried on with our plans until a few days before the march, when late comrade Walter Sisulu and the late Albert Luthuli, called Helen Joseph and Lilian Ngoyi to their offices.

women had respect, respect for themselves and respect for their leaders



They were anxious because things were beginning to appear in the press. The women were asked, in a very rough spirit, “Now you women, do you know what you’re doing?” And they said “Yes, we know what we are doing.” And the men asked, “And you are going ahead with what you know is a very dangerous thing, you know you can be arrested?” And the women said, “Yes, we know we can be arrested.” The men then asked, “What’s going to happen if you’re going to be arrested?” Lilian said, “The women know what to do if we are arrested.” So Walter asked, “Now what is this that you say the women know? What is it that they know they will do?” The women said to him, “When we are arrested there will be other leaders that will take our place.” And they seemed half-heartedly satisfied with the answer. But, Helen said, “We didn’t tell them the truth.” The truth was that we had strategised, that if the police came to arrest us, all of the women would kneel down and pray. They didn’t tell them that. Now when they knelt down and prayed, for theirs as women was a natural and deep faith, who was going to wrench 20 000 women kneeling down in prayer off to jail?

And so the march took place. After the march, the women went home without trashing the Union Building’ gardens. In their anger, they could have trashed the immaculate lawns and beautifully manicured shrubs of the Union Gardens. After all, Strijdom had run away from them. Those beautiful shrubs and those manicured lawns could have been a disaster but because they were disciplined, they didn’t do that. Why didn’t they? Because they had respect for themselves as women and had respect for their leaders and they had dignity and pride and so they marched as they came, in a disciplined way, they marched back to the bus stops, to the train stations and to the taxis. What did they do instead, where did they channel that anger? Into the song, *Wathint’ abafazi*, they channeled their anger into that song, “Strijdom you have struck a rock, you have touched the women, you will be killed.”

They sang and they sang; they didn’t trash anything.

When big marches take place in our cities today, our people are beaten up, our cities are trashed, the hawkers are beaten up and their stalls are thrown around and their goods are taken.

That is where they’ve channeled their anger – into mayhem, chaos and destruction. Not into song. When you ask them, I’ve asked many times, “But why do you do this, why do you disrupt your own properties, because what is in the country is





your own?” They will say, “No, no, we were angry because, perhaps so-and-so minister or such-and-such a premier didn’t come to take the memorandum, it was given to some junior person or to a middle manager, and so we were angry and that’s why we did it.”

But the women, too, were angry, they were also very, very angry, when Strijdom did not put in an appearance, but instead they contained their anger and channeled it into something beautiful – the song they sang and others, on their way to the train stations, the busses and the taxis.

So those are some of the lessons that we should be handing over to our young people.

In exile, we were under the umbrella of the ANC as a liberation movement. Our children grew up in exile, and were schooled in a British education system, where beautiful English was spoken and the syllabus was in English, the queen’s language. Our children also learnt to speak the local Zambian languages, IsiNyanja and Bemba. They grew up alien to their

own South African mother-tongue and culture. So we, the mothers, came together and decided we should do something about this. We asked two comrades, Sindiso Mfenyana (who was later the secretary of Parliament in Cape Town), and his wife, a Russian lady, Rita, who were knowledgeable about South African folklore, culture, song and dance, to teach it to our children. Rita was very dedicated, warm, and had a great love for children, but was also passionate, decisive and practical.

The two comrades, “Malume”, as we affectionately called him, and Rita, were given the task of starting the “*Mapututselas*” (“Young Pioneers”). The children were taught traditional dancing such as the Zulu *ndlamu*, and gumboot dancing. (My own daughters, Danielle and Sonja, can kick their legs very high having learnt the *ndlamu*.) Our children learnt arts and crafts, and they were conscientised in their culture, folklore, and languages.

We thought that we should steer our children in



the right direction, so that they would know their culture and so on. Coming home in 1990, after having been given amnesty, and having to adjust, having been out of South Africa for so long ... I listened to Ronnie Kasrils, last night on 702, Ronnie was saying when they asked him, "How did you adjust when you came home from exile, was it difficult for you to adjust?" And he said, "No, it wasn't difficult."

But I want to say a little bit about my own adjustment, having come back after being away so long. I left in 1966 to exile and we came back 1990, so the better part of my life was spent outside. I want to mention here, that for me, it was a bit difficult to adjust. Having got used to a certain style of life and manner, you now come home, and had to all over again readjust to

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your new environment. So many changes took place during your absence that you felt like a stranger in your country that you left so many years ago.

Families, too, and friends that you left behind, took some time to relate to again, until gradually you break the barriers, and are able to accept and relate to one another and respect one another's space.

So I'd just like to say to the younger people here that it's difficult nowadays, and we can't say to you, "Look, live like this in the way that we lived."

We had certain values that we adhered to and there were certain things that we didn't do, that were just a "no-no". Our parents said to us that certain things were for grown-ups, "Wait until you're grown up to do them," and so you didn't do them, and you were disciplined enough to not do those things. Thank you.



if i would do
it all again

RICA HODGSON

I'm glad you said you were short of time because my life is long, I mean in a month's time I'm going to be 87 years old. I've been in the movement for almost 60 years, it's a hell of a long time. I've got a long story and I'm writing a book so one of these days, before I die, I hope, I'll finish it.

When I was phoned by Naomi Warren of the Nelson Mandela Foundation and asked to speak today, I said, "What am I to speak about?" She said, "Well, we want to give young people lessons to follow." I can't give any of you young people any lessons whatsoever. And the reason I can't is because you are all very well educated, you have degrees, you have ambition, you have good jobs, you've already made money or you're so ambitious that you just want money. And we didn't have any of those things, I mean I have matric, and that's as far as I ever went. I started nursing but unfortunately I had to give up before I finished and I went into politics. Actually, I didn't go into politics, I was thrown into the deep end.

My very first job in the movement and I say "movement" in broad terms because I had a lot of bosses – I didn't know who they all were. Yes, that's right, I was not always sure who was giving me a roof over my head or food on the table. Whether it was the Communist Party or African National Congress or Umkhonto we Sizwe (MK). But nevertheless, I worked with some wonderful people. My very first job was with my late husband, Jack Hodgson, who was the national secretary of the then Springbok Legion. The Springbok Legion was the first ever anti-fascist ex-servicemen's organisation in this country, and the second next to the Communist Party then, that had no colour bar at all. And it did a wonderful job in the years that it lasted. It was for ex-servicemen and the idea was to bring into civilian lives the ideals for which the Second World War was fought against Hitler.

To do away with racism was the main thing, the

main thing that motivated me anyway, and the idea of freedom. So on my very first day, my husband offered me a job as a fundraiser, I wasn't married to him then. I said, "What's fundraising?" Then, I had no idea, I'd never done anything else. And he said, "Well, you go out there and you get money," because no organisation, as Sophie said, can work without money, and I became a fundraiser, comrades. Albie Sachs was speaking to me privately the other day, and said, "Rica you were the best fundraiser the movement ever had." Well I don't think that's strictly true but it's what I mainly did. Anyway, I said, "What's fundraising?" And he said, "Well, you go out there and you find your salary, that's your first job. If you don't come back with money, you don't get a salary."

From there the Springbok Legion threw its weight eventually behind the Congress of Democrats, which was the white wing of the Congress Alliance, ANC, Indian Congress and Coloured People's Congress. Then I became the fundraiser for that organisation. I was told what to do, I never asked. Some of the things I did briefly are what I'm going to now tell



where were the bombs first made? in my kitchen, with an old pestle and mortar

you. I did that job, then 156 people were arrested in the Treason Trial, including my husband. I became the fundraiser for the Treason Trial Fund, and eventually also the secretary. Because you had to just take jobs, I mean, nobody else was there to do them. While you were fundraising you were told to take over the secretarial work, so I did it. I think Mr Mandela must have been one of my bosses at that time.

After the Treason Trial, there were far more trials happening in the whole country and so the South African Defence and Aid Fund was formed and I then became the secretary-plus-fundraiser for that fund.

In 1954 I was banned, which explains why I was never at the Women's March, I'm afraid, nor was I at the Congress of the People. But it didn't stop me

and Amina's late husband, Yusuf Cachalia, from collecting all the food for the 3000 delegates at the Congress. If you remember, there were two famous banners. One said: "Soup with meat" and one said: "Soup without meat." It was the women who did the work there. Early in morning they came, they had to wash and scrub out oil drums and make fires in the open to cook for their Congress and people. And trestle tables were erected and they cut food to make soup with and without meat all day. And there was bread, there were lots of things donated, we didn't pay a penny for any of that food, it was all donated from Yugoslav butchers who'd come over, from bakers who were sympathetic, from all kinds of people.

From there, I was banned in 1954. But, I'll skip now because in 1960 Sharpeville happened and then we were thrown into detention, thousands of people were thrown into detention, men and women. And what I remember about that detention was when we had to move from the fort (the Women's Fort, now part of Constitution Hill), we didn't know where we were to be moved to.

And this is where women really showed their strength. When we were told to move, we said, "We're not moving, we're just not moving, and that's it." And we lay down on the floor when we were supposed to go, we were supposed to pack, and then we, all the women, lay on the floor and demonstrated, "We're not moving, do what you like but we aren't going. Our families are all here; we can't go anywhere else around the country."

When the police vans arrived to pick us up and take us off, and they asked the matron, and in her favour the matron of the fort in those days was an amazing woman, I mean we had some hefty women there, you know, how were the wardresses going to carry us out?

She said to the wardresses, "You carry them out." Well you know, I mean, it was a problem, there were 21 of us. And so these men came in their vans and said, "We'll do it, we'll take them," and she said, "You don't put a finger on my women!" Now that, I never forgot. Solidarity from all queer places. So we were taken like sacks and carried out, I mean I really felt sorry for the wardresses, poor things, they were having a hell of a time carrying us down and just threw us into the vans.

We were taken to Pretoria, which is a real hellhole of a jail, the worst ever. After that, we women started a hunger strike in Pretoria, because nobody would tell us when we were going to leave, what was happening to us and it was difficult for our families

to get there. We then staged a hunger strike and we sent a message out in Helen Joseph's bun in her hair to Nelson Mandela in the Treason Trial because she was allowed out every day, she was one of the trialists, to tell them that the women had gone on a hunger strike. So then the men joined in, in their part of Pretoria, wherever they were. That was just an episode I thought you'd like to share with me.

Then we were taken to, well we went to other jails, but we finally finished up at home back to what I had called "normal life" but it was never normal. MK was formed in 1961 and my husband became the first bomb-maker, he had certain skills. He'd been a miner and also served in the "Desert Rats" Tank Corps of Montgomery's 6th Army during World War 2, so he had some useful skills. He was one of the founding members of the MK.

Where were the bombs first made? In my kitchen, in my kitchen, with an old pestle and mortar. The pestle used to belong to my mother, one of these heavy, heavy brass things. Jack was never a well man, my husband, he was always sick from the day

I met him, always had problems but never stopped working, till the day he died and never lost his enthusiasm for freedom in South Africa, ever.

Anyway, there was my son at 14, helping his father grind the gunpowder. One day one of his friends came to visit, we were under house arrest then. And the friend said, "What are you doing?" Spencer said, "My father's just experimenting, you

know, he's got time on his hands under house arrest here." This kid was very good at science, he smelt the mixture and he said, "My God you can make bombs out of this, do you know that?" And Spencer said "Don't be silly, I mean ..."

In comic number two of the life of Nelson Mandela, Nelson's talking in that comic about the first bomb. They went to experiment at the old brick fields near Bedfordview and at first the

bomb didn't go off, and my husband jumped into the hole to go adjust it because it was his bomb and then got out and then you just saw this thing going off and Nelson saying, "It's worked!" And they were all safe, they didn't lose any limbs or anything.

And now for my comrade over there, Achmat

*And then we,
all women, lay
on the floor and
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do what you like but
we aren't going.'*





to do
away with
racism was
the main
thing that
motivated
me

Dangor, who can't use that word (comrade), I don't have an inhibition about it, I have used it for 60 years. At that time I did what we then called the "Indian collections", and I wanted to say for your benefit and any other Indians who may be in the hall, for everybody to know that at a certain period in our history, a very important period, the Indians became the backbone of the struggle in the manner in which they gave money in this country.

It was never easy, it was always like drawing teeth, but they gave, and God forbid you should ever write a receipt out for them. So everything came in cash and you wrote a receipt saying, "a friend" and "a very good friend", depending on how much money they gave.

Anyway, I wanted to say how eventually we were told we had to escape, Jack Hodgson had a special job to do in Botswana, then Bechuanaland, a British protectorate. Unfortunately we were in possession at that stage of British passports, my husband and me; our South African passports had been confiscated in 1954.

So we escaped and we got there but now we had British passports and we were in a British protectorate. Nevertheless the Brits deported us from there to Britain. There was a kidnap attempt on us by the Special Branch of the South African apartheid police, while we were there, but anyway we got through that.

So it's been a long and dangerous life, comrades, but I would do it all again.

I then got to England, now the Rivonia Trial had just started, and I had to work. I was, in the beginning of my marriage, the main breadwinner, I mean I also sometimes didn't get paid at all, but that was in the lap of the gods, you know. My husband hardly ever got paid I think, but he worked, he carried on regardless, so somebody had to bring bread into the house. So I needed a job, and anyway, I still wanted to do a job that was worthwhile.

I knew all about the work of Canon John Collins of St Paul's Cathedral, me the atheist, and I had to prove myself first. I did, by organising a function before I started work and it was successful. We got Robert Resha and Ronald Segal to speak and it went well and people gave us money in England; it was my first ever attempt at getting money.

I forgot to mention, comrades, I was also the secretary of the *King Kong* committee while I was still working for the Treason Trial Fund, during the break in the proceedings. I got the job, by the way, as fundraiser for the British Defence and Aid Fund and secretary, dual work. I worked there for 17 years,

because thousands and thousands and thousands of people were then being thrown into jail in South Africa. There were less and less breadwinners around, the children were starving, the wives were starving. Therefore something had to be done. Now the fund was banned in South Africa, and so we couldn't just send money in under our name, we had to devise something and we did. We devised a very easy plan, but agents that came over from Gordon Winter to Williamson never, ever discovered who was paying these funds into South Africa. We paid for all the trials, including the Rivonia Trial.

We saved all those lives that might otherwise have been hanged. We sent millions and millions of pounds, in cash comrades; I used to go with a shopping bag to the bank to get the money, every two months, to pay the families in South Africa. And we got people from all over the world, not only England, but Ireland and Holland and Norway and Sweden and Denmark and all over, to write letters to the families individually and send money and

that's how they survived, that's how the children managed to go to school, comrades. As I said, I have no lessons, I never had a skill, I never, ever, ever applied for a job. Thank God, I mean, I would

not have been able to say what I was capable of doing. I didn't have anything. I never learnt to touch type. When I came back to South Africa I worked for Walter Sisulu as his PA, but again I wasn't asked for anything. Why, what drove us? That's what I'm asked, what drove us? That's why I'm writing a book, so that I could pass on, maybe, some lessons to young people.

You're not going to get anywhere in this country until you've got proper

freedom. And proper freedom means freedom from poverty for everybody and for all people and literacy for everybody.

So there's something out there besides just money, comrades, and besides just yourselves, that should drive you. As Vuyo Mbuli in the mornings (on SAfm) says, "Go out there and make a difference." Do that comrades, that's all I've got to tell you.

The Indians became the backbone of the struggle in the manner in which they gave money in this country ... everything came in cash and you wrote a receipt saying, 'a friend' and 'a very good friend', depending on how much money they gave.





a better
life for all

AMINA CACHALIA

The important thing for me to say is that, we in this country, in 1994, we pledged “a better life for all”, and we haven’t reached that yet. When I look at people all around South Africa and I look at the rate of poverty and the growing unemployment, we haven’t really done all that much that we can praise ourselves for in the last 13 or 14 years.

We’ve come a long way, there is so much to do and the quicker we begin to do it, the quicker we can achieve a better life for all our people.

I lived a very wonderful existence all my life. I became politically active at a very young age because I came from a political home. My dad was already involved with Gandhi in the very old years of struggling in South Africa. So it was natural for me to realise that something was dreadfully wrong in this country and that I’ve got to let it come right.

I found myself joining organisations like the Indian Youth Congress so many years ago and putting up posters, dishing out leaflets and organising meetings and just doing basic activist work all my life, in the hope that some day, we’d have a different South Africa.

We were always divided and ruled by a regime that we would have liked to bring to their knees many decades ago. We struggled tremendously for that day to happen. It finally happened, many decades later.

But the important thing for me was, all those many years ago, the deprivation of women in our society. When we were organising even for the 20000 people that were going to go to Pretoria for that occasion, we found it extremely difficult because we had to do our organising at night. And visiting factories in the day was easier because we used to go to a factory and talk to a shop steward, and talk to



the women about the march and its importance. But it was the Indian women, coloured women, because we were so divided and ruled, that we had to go to at night mostly.

We got a group of women together in Fordsburg and the old Vrededorp, and Doornfontein and various other places, and women would come to meetings. The Indian Youth Congress were the people that picked up these women for us from there and they would come at night to my flat and from there we would set out on foot to organise for the women that were supposed to come to the Union Buildings. It was a tremendous organisational period for us. We went from door to door to organise and we had to do that because we had to get the permission of the fathers, of the brothers, of the husbands, if their women could come to the August the 9th march to Pretoria.

And as we went from house to house, the men would have come back from work or their businesses or whatever they were doing, and the women were usually home. We had to talk to them about the march and about all the necessary information, getting there and giving them a pledge that it would be peaceful, that they would not get hurt, if the

When I went to prison in 1952 for the Defiance Campaign, that was a highlight for me.

in 1994, we pledged ‘a better life for all’, and we haven’t reached that yet



police came, that we would take care of that. And in many cases the husbands said, “Well, you can take my wife along or my sister or my whatever but you’ve got to be absolutely sure that nothing will happen to them, they will not get arrested.” Well that we couldn’t pledge because we couldn’t tell them that they would be 100% safe on that day, but we told them that it was going to be peaceful and that’s what we pledged.

And they could all gather at the one spot, at the old Red Square, or at my flat, or any place where they chose to go, we would find transport for them or we would take them to the station and take them off to Pretoria. It was such an experience that organising, and for many years later it stood us in very good stead, because we knew exactly how to go about organising our people in various areas.

But the most important thing for me is not that actual march, really, that was a highlight for many, many of us. But when I went to prison in 1952 for the Defiance Campaign, that was a highlight for me, because it put me in the same cell with other people and I learnt to realise so early on that my aspirations and my hopes and my desires, they were not only mine, they were throughout the length and breadth of South Africa. We were shoved together in one cell; two cells really, one big one and one small one. And we were 29 women who went voluntarily to prison in 1952, 26 August – the first batch of women that went to prison. That was so important for me, personally, because here I spent, for the first time in my life, time with women, other activists in prison – slept with them, ate with them, cleaned the toilet with them, cleaned the courtyard with them, which was absolutely spectacular, it was clean already. Boksburg Prison was one of the cleanest prisons those years, but nevertheless we had to get up in the morning and do that.

Here I spent time with all types of women, one coloured woman, ordinary African women and Indian women, we had one prison for coloured women and African women. And we ate the same food, cleaned the same courtyard and we sang the same songs. We absolutely identified with the new South Africa that was going to come many decades later. It was so important for us to live together because there was always, in every group in South Africa, the divide and the rule that the racist government had achieved.

We never knew that. When I say we, it means a lot of the Indian women, not me personally, because I was privileged, because I had friends and I had other activists that I worked with. There were so



many other people who just had a sort of employer/employee relationship all along with people. And there was never an idea of getting any dignity and any freedom across from that perspective, in our homes, in our areas where we worked and everywhere. Because there was continuously this employer/employee situation, where people just treated other people as workers and bosses and it never came to anything else. In our organisations, it was different. I think to a certain extent that situation still exists in South Africa, in spite of the fact that we are free now.

We are not equal yet. Our great slogan when we came into being was “A Better Life for All” and that has not quite taken off yet. We still find unemployment to such an extent. Goodness me, we’ve got to come to terms with South Africa and see that that slogan takes off.

When I saw a clip on television not so long ago, on Women’s Day, I’d just come out of hospital, and there was this lady walking in Soweto and she was asked what better life has she had? She was doing her own thing, she was walking to work or going to sell whatever she had and being poor and being disadvantaged, and I thought to myself, “Yes, we have failed in the last 13 years of freedom.”

We have gained a great deal and we’ve made wonderful progress, which we keep telling ourselves,

but we also have become such a greedy country in a sense and such a personally greedy people, where we just want to amass money for ourselves continuously. And we seem to have forgotten this wonderful slogan, “A Better Life for All”. We haven’t really come to terms with that, not yet. There’s still such a long way to go. We have come a long way but there is still so much to do and the sooner we begin, the more we can achieve “A Better Life for All.”

I lived a very good life, all my young years. I met young men and women of all colours and creeds. All of us were dedicated to the cause of freedom. I got politically involved at a very young age, because I came from a political home. It was clear for me to realise that something was dreadfully wrong in this country and I had to help to rectify it.

I found myself joining organisations like the Progressive Women’s Union, the Indian Youth Congress and later the Federation of South African Women, the Human Rights Committee and the Peace Council. I joined other activists when we had to put up posters, hand out leaflets, organise meetings and protests. We did the basic and dangerous jobs, but I am proud to have done that all my young life in the hope that some day we would have a different South Africa.

The regime would end. We struggled tremendously for that day to happen. It finally happened, too many decades later.

A black and white photograph of a woman with short dark hair and glasses, speaking into a microphone. She is wearing a light-colored, textured jacket. A name tag is pinned to her jacket on the right side, which reads "NELSON MANDELA FOUNDATION" and "Chris Mendi FDC".

we are the
pillars of
our families

GRAÇA MACHEL

I'd like to thank the Nelson Mandela Foundation's Centre of Memory and Dialogue for putting together this gathering. I am humbled by some of the things I learnt, and others I was reminded of, which together have made me reflective this morning.

What I would like to suggest is that this kind of dialogue continues. Our generation, the old guard, have been failing to tell our stories properly. You can write a book, but there is nothing that can replace direct contact and conversation. I must confess that if there is one way the Nelson Mandela Foundation has failed, it is that we have allowed people like Walter Sisulu to go without having given him an opportunity to talk to young people.

People like Govan Mbeki and others are gone, too, and with them a part of our history. We should continue to have this kind of conversation with the

leaders who are still with us.

We need to listen to them. We need to connect the two or three generations which are in between and say, "Yes, this is how it was, but how is it today, what are the challenges young people are facing, even with the deep will of relinking the chain?" I would like to think there is a chain of life, a chain of values, which was passed from those days to today. How does this chain renew itself?

Sometimes we are puzzled about how to talk to our children. My family, the small family which I came from before I joined the big family of the Mandelas, in both my two families, I have three or four generations. It's easiest to talk to the older generation. When it comes to the younger ones, it's extremely difficult – I'm not so sure whether I'm being the role model I should be to them. We need to try to understand and we need to connect the chain of life, so that we reinvigorate it and make it useful



I would like to think there's a chain of life, a chain of values, which was passed from those days to today

for whatever the needs and challenges of today are.

Having said this, one of the things which puzzles me, is how we came to a situation where we face such high levels of sophisticated violence, which is being committed against women, children, and the elderly. You know stealing a cellphone is one thing. You don't need to rape and re-rape, I mean to humiliate completely another human being, just to take a cellphone. It is done to the elderly, it is done to women, it is done to children. We are the women, those pillars; the pillars of our families. I'm not taking away the responsibility of men, but I'm saying we, the mothers, the grandmothers and the



great-grandmothers, this is something we need to sit down and talk about. What is happening, how is it from my womb I end up with this kind of child who looks to his sister, to his niece and does the kinds of things which are happening?

Yes, we have issues with the political continuity, but I think we have fundamental things which have to do with that small-style family that we come from. The family has given us the values we are talking about. With my mother and father, my brother, my uncle, it started with the family.

I don't think we'll overcome the issue of violence against women, violence against children, without

asking the questions: What is the family? What is the structure of the South African family? What is going wrong with that family? How it is to become again the nurturing space, the loving and caring space, which every single human being in this country relates to? I think we have fundamental problems there.

The judiciary system has to punish, and punish very severely. It has to keep those monsters out of society. But many other monsters will spring up if we do not go back to the source of the problem. We need to continue this kind of debate. When we talk of political commitment and the connection to your community, these need to be fundamentally linked to the family.

Many of our young people in their 40s, 30s, and 20s, have never had the family I'm talking about. It was broken, it was broken by someone and because some of them are becoming parents without having

it themselves, they can't transmit to others. Have you noticed how many families are being broken?

You go to the schools and ask how many of the kids come from broken families, and then you realise that teachers can't cope, they absolutely can't cope! The fundamental social constructions which give a sense of belonging and a sense of structure are family and school. School cannot do it alone without family and family cannot do it alone without school.

The challenge we have is exactly that: how do we regain this, that anchor, which is our family, and the values that will lead people to church?

I just want to say it has been such a privilege for me, really, to sit and listen. I know all of you, but it was a humbling experience to sit and listen to you today. We need to talk, young and old, so that our discussions can lead somewhere. Thank you for coming.

I just want to say it has been such a privilege for me, really, to sit and listen.





Abahle Tsimbe 1925 - 2007

Abahle Tsimbe was a prominent South African anti-apartheid activist and a member of the African National Congress (ANC). She was born in 1925 and spent her early years in the rural areas of the Transvaal province. Tsimbe was active in the struggle against apartheid, participating in various forms of resistance, including strikes and protests. She was known for her courage and commitment to the cause of freedom and equality for all South Africans. Her work was instrumental in the fight against the apartheid regime, and she is remembered as a significant figure in the history of the anti-apartheid struggle.

The Malibongwe Exhibition, curated by the Apartheid Museum, was displayed in the foyer of Mandela House from March to June 2007.

LET'S DIALOGUE PANEL DISCUSSION

Sibongile Mkhabela facilitated the question-and-answer session.

I'd like to expand the panel, in terms of responses, Mama Bertha Gxowa is here, Mama Vesta Smith is here. So as questions come, I'd like to turn this into what Sis' Hlophe was talking about, an inter-generational conversation.

We have several generations here. We have two or three, maybe four. And we're going to have a good inter-generational conversation, having been started by the ladies up here, and having Ma Bertha and Ma Vesta here to also be respondents on some of the questions. Ma Graça Machel, I think you come after, I think you're another generation. We've got about four, five generations here, and that should be a very vibrant conversation.

We could possibly be starting with a statement: we're nowhere next to being properly free. And I think I would add, freedom is not given, you can't have freedom on a plate.

No-one is ever going to deliver freedom to you and I suppose one of the mistakes we've made is to talk as if someone is going to stand at your door and deliver empowerment. There are things you can't deliver because people must claim them and freedom is just one of those things that you have to claim, it's never going to be delivered.

So where are we right now, today, at a point where "A Better Life for All" is being, or becoming, a distant dream for most people, especially women and children? What are the questions that the other generations might have, questions, comments and ways forward in fact?

Freedom is not given, you can't have freedom on a plate.



NOKUKHANYA JELE

I've heard you speak of things that are different now from when you were all striving to give me the opportunities I have, thanks to your sacrifices, but I want to talk about things that are still the same. The reality of it, is that we're still here and as was heard in the room here today: "Let's deal with the racial inequalities first, then we'll deal with these women's issues later."

Today we have the resources, we have the human resources, we have the monetary resources, and yet there's a sense of complacency and a difficulty in getting individuals to simply sacrifice a Saturday afternoon. As a lawyer, what we do is we try to get them to do that, one Saturday afternoon a month to give free legal advice.

You have no idea how hard it is to get lawyers to do that. They will commit to 20 hours a year of *pro bono* work, nothing more. Twenty hours a year is nothing compared to the amount of work that is needed to make sure that we continue the work that all of you so arduously worked at for such a long time. Today, how do we achieve that commitment?



MICHELE RUITERS

You've spoken about 20 000 women coming together through amazing organisation without any modern technology.

How do we get a women's movement started in South Africa again that ignores race and class? Not ignores in the sense that we don't address those issues, but ignores it in terms of bringing us together as women. How do we get gender to be the most important issue that brings women together, because today, still, women are second-class citizens in this country? We've struggled since 1994 to start up a women's movement in South Africa. How do we go about doing it, is it necessary?

BERTHA GXOWA

Thank you very much. I just want to say in adding to my colleagues' memories, that one other thing which was very important with us was planning.

People ask us why did we choose a Thursday? Women were very strategic, my colleague, my friend here, Hlophe, spoke about the church, and Sophie just explained what we were going to say once the police came, we'd all kneel down.

And in fact, that's why we actually preferred women to put on their church uniforms, because at the time when the police come we are going to turn it into a church rally, not a political rally.

And we chose Thursday specifically because Thursday is a *manyanos* day (a day women have chosen to get together at church without the men, and wearing their uniforms) for women in the whole country and those days, Thursdays, we used to call "Sheila's Day-Off", the domestic workers were off, that's why.

So there was that element of planning and it was very strategic, women were very strategic. Well there's not enough time really to tell you the real things about that day today. But I want to come to this, when will you come and form one, united women's movement like we did? You see, with us, the Federation of Women got together, the workers, professionals, the church, everybody was affiliated to the federation.

Today my problem is that when we celebrate these days, for instance, August 9th, now government appealed and said August 9th is a national women's day for everybody, we are too fragmented.



This one celebrates in that corner, a little thing here and that one in another small *stokvel* that side and another one that, we never come back together. I think if we can begin now, when we celebrate these days, I know we can't bring the whole country together, but at least we can share these experiences and bring everybody on board. Everybody must understand what was happening with us, I think that will assist us. Thank you.



I just want to say, and this is very dear to my heart, the Federation of South African Women has never been disbanded, so if anybody wants to know how to bring women together, get in touch with women who were in the Federation of South African Women.
– Sophia Williams-De Bruyn

BRIGALIA NTOMBEMHLOPHE BAM

I think that we are struggling with this idea that, if we form a women's movement, then we are going to solve all our problems. I think let's also be realistic. The reason that women got together back then, and it was a little easier, was that there was a common enemy and there was a common vision. Generally, there were things that we all wanted as women, and we had a common call.

We have now 82 registered political parties and this means it's becoming more difficult than ever for women to feel that their first loyalty is to the political party. Women of today perhaps also don't feel the same loyalty to a movement we did back then.

I come from a church tradition, as do many others. There was a time when there were something like 50 denominations in South Africa. Today, there are over 350, the religious landscape is also becoming more diverse. Today, the loyalty is more often to your church rather than to the movement. So there are new crisis areas that we have to look at.

But, in spite of that I think we should try. Now I'm here to sell this idea, please give me a chance just to do that.

Zanele Mbeki inspired many of us when we worked very hard with the women from the Democratic Republic of Congo, for two years.

We in South Africa found ourselves forming, not in a conscious manner, the South African Women in Dialogue (SAWID), because we realised that after 1994, we were more divided than we will ever think. It was almost impossible for us to meet.

It is still difficult to meet, even for those who belong to the same political party, for those who belong to the same church, for those who belong to the same *stokvel*, and we were more divided on all grounds – class, religion, anything. So this is shameful, there must be something that we do. So this SAWID idea is that, let's call it a dialogue,

Theoretically, I think the government has done everything in the Constitution. So those of you who want to do some things and give volunteer time, please come to us, SAWID.



because if we call it a "movement" we might get into trouble. Somebody might say, "Who's right, whose mandate do you have to form a movement?"

I tried it when I was overseas, it didn't work because I didn't have a "mandate".

Now we have one, and I'm selling this. What's going to help us to deal with these problems is to have a common theme, a common cause that is a reality, and that is poverty.

We sent two groups, one to Tunisia, one to Chile, to see how, as women, they are dealing with the issue of poverty, because they have

fewer resources than us.

So now we are working on this project and we would like to invite as many of you as possible to join us. You don't have to belong to any party, please come. You don't have to be any class, please come! And we are trying to see how we can work together with our various government departments on this.

So I'm just saying, here is a movement, a movement that dialogues. We talk to one another; we try to communicate and dialogue because in our experience, all of us and the world over, you can't deal with racism only through the law. The more you legislate as they've seen in United States, the more the people resist. It's an old thing – we find that in Brazil they are worse off than us, United States is worse off than us.

Theoretically, I think the government has done everything in the Constitution, the foundations have been laid. So those of you who want to do things and volunteer time, please come to us, SAWID. We will welcome your skills, we'll welcome your time. If you have a little time once a month to take one girl, please, you are welcome.

There's another movement, started by Stella Sigcau, that I'm encouraging amongst women. We call it "Plough-Back", the National Plough-Back Trust, because we discovered that many of us, have our origins in rural communities. We left our rural communities and when we go back, we find that they are very much poorer than us, because we have been able to live in Johannesburg, in Pretoria, to get good jobs and so on.

But when we go back home we discover that there are serious problems of resources, like perhaps no nursery school. So these are new things we need to think of, our new way of freedom. Adopt one family.

When I was working in Geneva for instance, the Swiss families adopted 65 families in South Africa, that's all.

And then yearly, I collected money from each and every of those 65 families. Once you do that, then there's a future for them because they can have an education ...

And so these are some of the things we need to begin to think of, and not assume that Minister of Education Naledi Pandor will be able to find money for every child in South Africa. Your R300, your R500, honestly, it's amazing in school fees what that can do.

So those are some of the things that we can begin – all of us – to do, not big-scale things, but small, because if you do it with one family, with one girl, with one boy, it's amazing the things we can do.

STANLEY MANZINI

I'd like to say first of all I'm overwhelmed with this meeting and I feel that you guys have done a lot for the freedom that we have today. I believe that the biggest thank you that you'd expect from us is if we take off from where you left off; even though you are still going on, if we continue to live the legacy for our children.

Well I'm from an engineering background and we don't have a lot of women there. One of the things Ma Hlophe mentioned, is that women, they studied, they went to school. Now most of us, we don't want to go to school. Someone once said if you want to hide something from a black man, put it inside a book. Now those who have studied, we don't share these skills with the others. For example, if you have gone and done engineering, you as a lady take off some of your time and go to those rural areas and educate some kids. But most of us we expect to be paid to do this.

With my wife we have gone to the rural areas where you say, "I don't expect someone to give me the money but I will use what I have to get what I don't have." They didn't have money, but they had talent and they used that talent to get what they didn't have. And I would just like to encourage each and every one here that, if you can learn and strive for perfection and strive for doing good, money will just follow. Use what you have to get what you don't have. Thank you.



SINAH GWEBU

Thank you very much, I am representing Disabled Women of South Africa. When I grew up, there was a thing called *letšema*, whereby the community will go and help the people next door or even, you know, the community would help each other.

But today it's another environment where you're looking at yourself only, you don't care to help your neighbour or even one disabled woman, who you can just lift to work or even help to raise the children.

We must start helping each other. I can see now that when you want to plough back into your community, you have to love your community, and to start seeing people on the ground. If you are up there, not even going to your people down there, you are missing a lot.

Last year there was a movement launched in Bloemfontein, whereby different women gathered. From Bloemfontein they went to Pretoria and the movement is still going on, whereby provinces are launching branches that are part of this movement.



So we appeal to all the women, all races, to come and join that movement.

I ask women to support disabled women as well, because we are an aggressive movement now. We need support; we are not going to say we are going to wait for a plate to be brought to these women, but we are just going to go on and on and on fighting for that plate.

THANDI MANZINI

The few things that I've picked up from the speakers is that, whatever they did, they did it out of nothing. As women, sometimes we wait for someone to do something for us.

I know sometimes that we can blame our background and say "It's how I grew up", because sometimes as girls, we are brought up being this little princess who's waiting for Prince Charming to do things for you. And what I've learnt through life is that it doesn't work like that. We need to take the initiative, nobody is going to ask you to do things, but you have to stand up and go after what you believe that you want. As women, we have a pull him/her down syndrome. With them, they were supporting each other.

And again, I believe that they say that it takes one woman to bring a child into this world but it takes the whole village to bring that child up, charity starts at home. When I grew up, even though I had



neighbours, I looked at them as my mothers and my fathers. I had to answer to them about what I'm doing and today that is not how we are.

Charity does not begin at home with us anymore because even our siblings today, you don't know what they are doing, you don't know where they are. If you're not making an impact in your own home, how can you make an impact on the community and the country and the world?

SHIRLEY MABUSELA

I feel very honoured to have just been here this morning. First of all looking at the exhibition and listening to the stalwarts who are addressing us here today, to remind us we are not so young anymore, and to remind us about the responsibility that we all have as women.

We all have some kind of gift or potential ability which I believe is important to be shared. When we talk about sharing, this is what we are doing. I also think that we all come from somewhere, we are based somewhere, you know, in your locality, in your township, you belong to churches as Brigalia is saying, we belong to *stokvels*, we belong in various little groups. And I believe that, if we go out of this dialogue today and make a difference in the groupings that we work with or we belong to in our own communities, those small groups, we will have achieved something.

Because it's true that we still don't have a good life for all. We need to look at what it is that we can do in those small groups in our own areas, to



impact positively. We are in families, we've got daughters that we are raising, how are we raising them? We've got sons, let me emphasise that, whom we are raising, whose behaviour is impacting, either positively or very negatively, on women's ability to become who they are and to make a contribution in society. I plead with all of us, that we go back and be the best we can be where we are because that is where the people are. Thank you.



DELPHINE SERUMAGA

I'm the director of POWA (People Opposing Women Abuse). I want to say that I envy all of you, I'm jealous of what you've all done.

Because today, as an organisation, we feel that we're being activists but we have an issue of activism becoming a bad word or feminism becoming a bad word, to a point where when I'm asked what my occupation is on a form I write "activist" because I'd like to promote that.

I think activism is the spirit of what would bring it all together. I agree that it's not just about creating just one movement and I think women are not homogeneous, therefore there are many different things that we can do as individuals. I'm so proud to be in your presence and I'm not sure that we can do what you've done. All we need to say is that we'll try and carry on the work that you have done. We'll push ourselves and we'll remain activists because I believe you were true activists. You embody the word of activism and we will try and follow through with that.

NELSON MANDELA

Founder of the Nelson Mandela Foundation, Nelson Mandela, makes a special appearance to greet the stalwarts.



NELSON MANDELA: How are you?

BRIGALIA BAM: I'm fine thanks, how are you?

MANDELA: Aha, what are the men doing there?

BAM: You mean, what are you doing here?

MANDELA: Oh, I recognise many faces here, many faces. Some of them were youngsters, you know, when I was active, but now they are planners of the future of the country. You see how things have changed? I'm very happy to be here. Thank you very much. We were together in the struggle and you did very well.

VESTA SMITH: And so did you.

MANDELA: I'm happy to hear that, thank you very much.



I hope you know about these ladies. They played a very important role in the struggle. Some of us, we can't measure up to the sacrifices they made.



CONCLUSION

SIBONGILE MKHABELA

Our esteemed panelists have raised a number of issues today, including the importance of the spiritual being, which is a very important element in our lives today.

They have also talked about the importance of knowing the people you're with, as well as the values that drive them. And I think it is in the values where we're probably going to find the answers that we're looking for. It's not so much in the technicalities, in the strategies and so on, but it's the underlying values, which were also emphasised today.

When you talk about women's unity, you also talk about organising our own resources. I work for a donor agency, but I know that when people have thoughts about how they want to change their communities, they immediately go to an outsider to say, "Give us money to change our lives." It baffles

me – if I can't put my own money into it, I do not believe in it enough. We've been hearing that if you want to pursue your own dreams, they cannot be pursued, frankly, by other people. They can support you, they can help you, but certainly they cannot determine your future. That's why our agenda for

development is so driven from outside, because we don't set it, it's set by others.

Thank you very much, thanks to all the participants and my esteemed, very powerful panel. This has been the one platform that has introduced the old words that most of us had forgotten: family values, activism, volunteerism, conversations, sharing – all those things

that we'd forgotten. And maybe just in each of those words, lie values that we might want to interrogate and bring out and ask, "What does it mean for our work?" And maybe, finally, to say there's a flow of information that probably doesn't happen at the rate at which it ought to happen, flow of information

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from professional organisations, to communities, to government.

So those who sit in professional organisations will rattle off the statistics, they'll tell you how many children were raped, how many children were doing this. But that information is academic, if it does not move to the ground to mobilise communities, because we will not find common threats if we don't understand what the threats are in our communities. And those threats, which often lie and sit with professional organisations like the Nelson Mandela Children's Fund where I work, will tell you what's going on in your villages.

But that information, of course, going on in the village, is really of no use to anyone if the women of Gamathabatha and the men and the churches don't get the feedback from those organisations that are operational in those communities. So I suppose we need to be crossing lines and ensuring that the Bongi who goes to the Children's Fund is the same one who goes to the church so I can say to the church, "This is what is going on in your communities. I know because I've been there and what are you doing about it?"

So I think we need to be having many conversations and Sis Hlophe, thanks for that platform that you introduced, South African Women in Dialogue, because there's a lot of things that we need to be dialoguing about.



REFLECTIONS

WHAT PEOPLE THOUGHT



This was very informative, very inspiring. It created a platform for us to draw strength from activists. I'll be able to share this – I'm thinking about ways to introduce this type of programme into the presidency

– **MBANGI DZIVHANI, THE PRESIDENCY**



I think this is a good thing. Maybe next time, something like this, let's take it to the women in the township, in the grassroots and not just for two hours, but for five hours.

– **BERTHA GXOWA, STALWART ACTIVIST**



This dialogue was a good idea and it contributes to moral regeneration. It'll also enable us to write our own stories, because women's stories are not told. We hope the new generation will learn from such endeavours, which will enable them to protect our democracy.

– **SINAH GWEBU, DISABLED PEOPLE SOUTH AFRICA**



Today was quite special; it's hopefully the beginning of younger people coming together. In the past, we knew our enemy. Today, they don't know who the enemy is. We must get young men and women together, but not put more pressure on them because they have a lot of pressure. We need to show them the way.

– **AMINA CACHALIA, STALWART ACTIVIST**



It's always an honour to meet these women we know too little about, to be reminded of just how much they endured.

NOKUKHANYA JELE, HUMAN RIGHTS AND ADVOCACY PROJECT



This was an emotional experience for me. I felt like going up to the ladies and saying, 'You're hot, you're so beautiful!'

– **MMATSHILO MOTSEI, AUTHOR**



I thought it was great, I enjoyed every minute of it. I agree that this kind of dialogue must be carried on. What appalls me is that when you speak to young people they don't know of the Treason Trial or of the People's Congress. We need to record our stories for our history, and not for ourselves.

– **RICHA HODGSON, STALWART ACTIVIST**



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