

# SPEAK

1991

No. 34



**Enough is enough-Joburg Women march  
to stop violence against women**

**\*Can women lead ?**

**\*"Sharing the Load" -**

**A great new book to read**

**\*Preventing pregnancy with  
diaphragms and condoms**



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We have just moved offices in Durban to :Office 1708, 17 Floor, Metal Industries House, 15 Ordnance Road, Durban 4001.

Johannesburg: Office 7, 17 Floor, Conlyn House, 156 President Street, Johannesburg ,2001. Telephone (011) 296166

If you wish to write to SPEAK write to :SPEAK, P.O. Box 45213, Mayfair 2108, Johannesburg, South Africa.

SPEAK members are: Gill, Helen, Jacqueline , Karen, Nise, Phumelele, Shamim , Pumla and Vanessa .

We welcome Pumla, a new staff member in the Johannesburg office.

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## Speaking Out

Everybody is alive with talk about changes that must happen to bring about our new South Africa. People's hopes are high. Now is a good time to look around at what happened in liberation struggles elsewhere.

Zimbabwe, Namibia, Mozambique have all been through the struggle for liberation. But we hear some bitter voices from women in these other countries. They fought for freedom alongside men but for them, little has changed. The poem in this SPEAK, written by women from Zimbabwe, says this loud and clear.

Men and women in South Africa have to ensure that liberation does not leave women

the kitchen. They have to get vigilant and put women's demands on the agenda. If they don't, women will end up living in the old South Africa and men in the new South Africa.

Capable women who stand up for women's rights must be elected into decision-making structures - whether in unions, community organisations, churches or the future parliament. It is up to women to make this happen. And it is up to men who believe in a non-sexist future to give their support.

Now is the time to unite and organise to take up the challenge to shape and build the South Africa that is new and just for everyone.

# **SPEAK** readers speak out

Dear SPEAK readers,  
We had a big response to our article on teenage pregnancies in SPEAK 31. Many readers wanted more information about teenage pregnancies. We will have more articles about this in future SPEAKs. Meanwhile, we have a resource pack on teenage pregnancies and preventing pregnancy. If you would like to get this send us R5.00 and we will send it to you. Keep writing! -  
**SPEAK Collective.**

## **New South Africa not new orphans**

Dear SPEAK

I salute you in the name of our President, Comrade Oliver Tambo, for his leadership of the ANC. Can you please supply me with information about teenage pregnancy. I am worried about what really happens. So please send me information to teach others who are in the dark, because each one teach all. We are ready for a new South Africa not new orphans.

**Petrus Molelekwa**  
**Botshabelo**

## **More Information**

Dear SPEAK

I am very happy to find this opportunity to write this letter to you. With this letter I request more information about teenage pregnancy. If possible may you please send me the SPEAK magazine. I will be very happy if my request can be granted.

**K M Manamela Enkelbult**

Dear friend, To get SPEAK regularly, subscribe to SPEAK. The rates are on page 27.

## **Against beatings**

Dear SPEAK,

I wish to respond to your article in SPEAK 33, 1991 on the meaning of love for youngsters.

I am against a man who beats a woman for any reason. Our teenagers need to be educated about the values of mankind. A woman deserves respect from her partner. Beatings only show disrespect and jealousy. The woman of today must fight to liberate herself. To achieve this she must strive to be informed, and mix with constructive people who will build her self-esteem. A man who beats a woman will only serve to destroy your pride and esteem. Do not allow it to happen to you. You owe it to yourself to build your image in society. Stand up African women. Join the masses of women who are fighting against gender oppression. In the process you are not only freeing yourself but the whole of womanhood.

**Mahadi Miya**  
**Johannesburg**

## **Teenage pregnancy**

Dear SPEAK

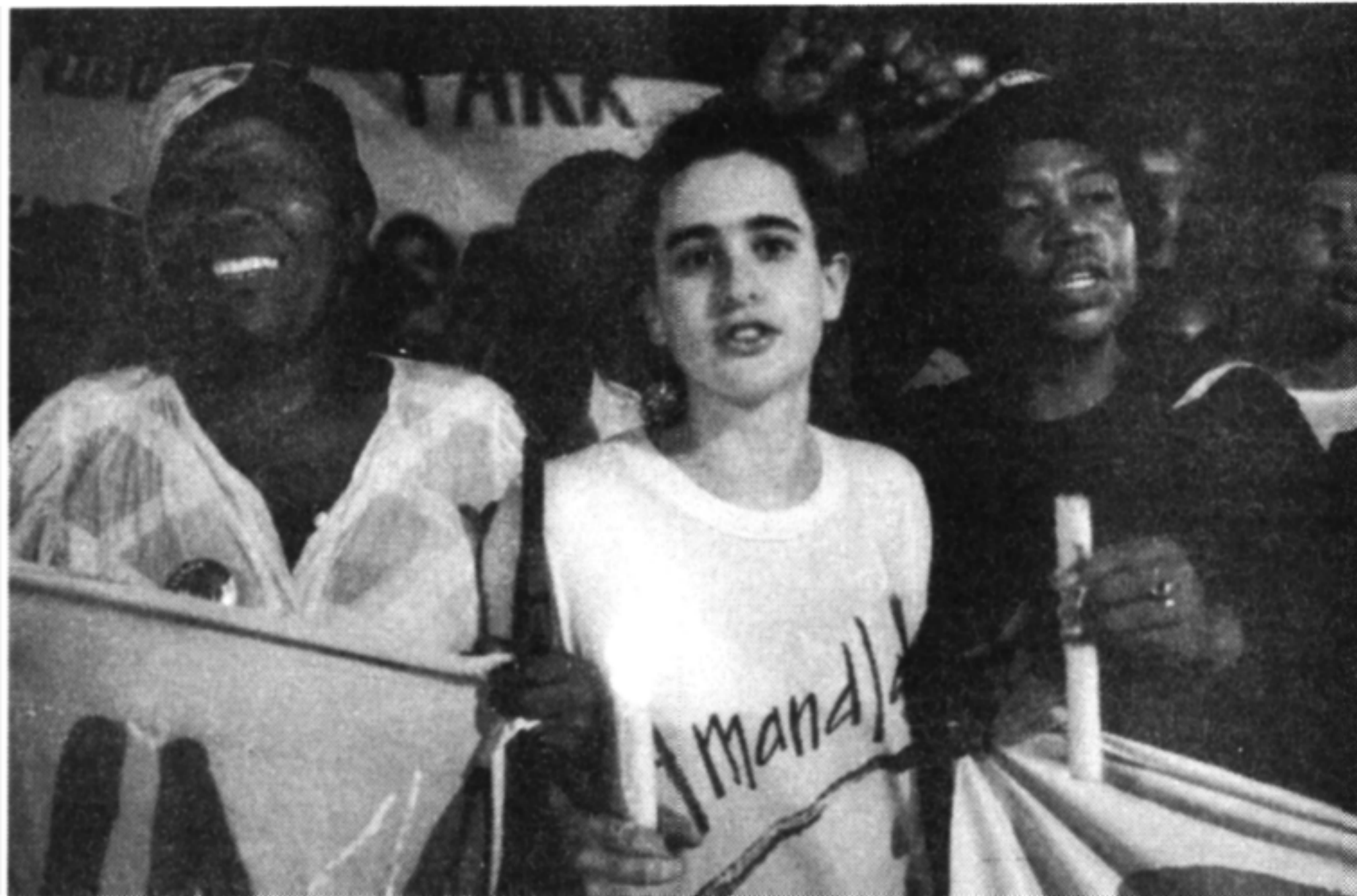
Please allow me to air my views in your magazine. I am very concerned about the high rate of teenage pregnancy. This is sometimes caused by lack of parental care. Some parents leave their children alone without care. The result is children get badly influenced by their peers. Both parents and children are to blame. Parents must teach their children the facts of life and the truth as to where a child is from.

It seems our youth do not know the difference between love and sex. Many young girls fall pregnant at the age of twelve and thirteen. This happens simply because they seem to be uncontrollable and undecided. Some of them are ignorant. Please let us work hand in hand to eliminate this problem. I wish the SABC could televise sex education in TV2 and TV3 and air this programme on all black radio stations. The Department of Education and Training can also assist by introducing sex education at high schools. The youth must be encouraged to use contraceptives that would never harm their health. Boys must also use condoms to prevent pregnancies. Many young girls are fooled by their boyfriends. These stupid boys demand that they prove their fertility. If a boy tells you that nonsense just refer him to a medical doctor. If he insists, you have got the right to take legal actions against him.

**S A Legong**  
**Mbibane**

This letter has been shortened





# Enough is enough stop violence against women

Women march against violence on International Women's Day in Johannesburg. Photo: Afrapix

*"As women we want to feel safe in our homes, offices, streets. We want better health care facilities. We want women to be treated with respect and most of all, we want an end to all kinds of violence against women."*

*This was the International Women's Day message from Johannesburg women on March 8 this year. They want an end to the situation where:*

*\* Every day more than 1 000 women are raped in South Africa.*

*\* 10% of all girls are sexually abused by men in their families.*

*\* 390 000 women are raped every year in South Africa - one every one-and-a-half minutes.*

*\* About one third of women are beaten by their husbands.*

*\* Only 1,3% of rapists are convicted and charged with rape.*

In the pouring rain, with candles burning bright under umbrellas, women marched at night through Hillbrow to reclaim the night. Black and white, young and old, women united to bring awareness to South Africans that violence against women has no place in a just South Africa. Men were also part of the march. 'Enough is enough,' said one banner, 'stop violence against women.'

## **A fear women live with every day**

The marchers handed out pamphlets which made it clear what the march was about. Many women passing by understood and supported the march. One woman, Maria, watched from the pavement as the march came closer. She had just come off night shift. What did she think of the march?

"I think it's a good idea," she said.

"Do you fear violence from men?" we asked.

"Yes I do, everyday."

"What do you fear?"

"Rape," she said, as she joined the march.



## This is about human rights

The march ended at Highpoint shopping centre where women speakers addressed the marchers.

People Opposed to Woman Abuse (POWA) offers advice and counselling to abused women. POWA helped organise the march. A spokesperson for POWA said: "The march is about violence. Women feel safe now because we are together. This doesn't happen every day... There isn't a place where women are safe in our society. Think of the women who would love to be here, but can't because they are dead. Raped, strangled, battered to death by their husbands. There isn't an institution that can guarantee the safety of women .... We say violence against women is wrong. This is about human rights."

## Making a point

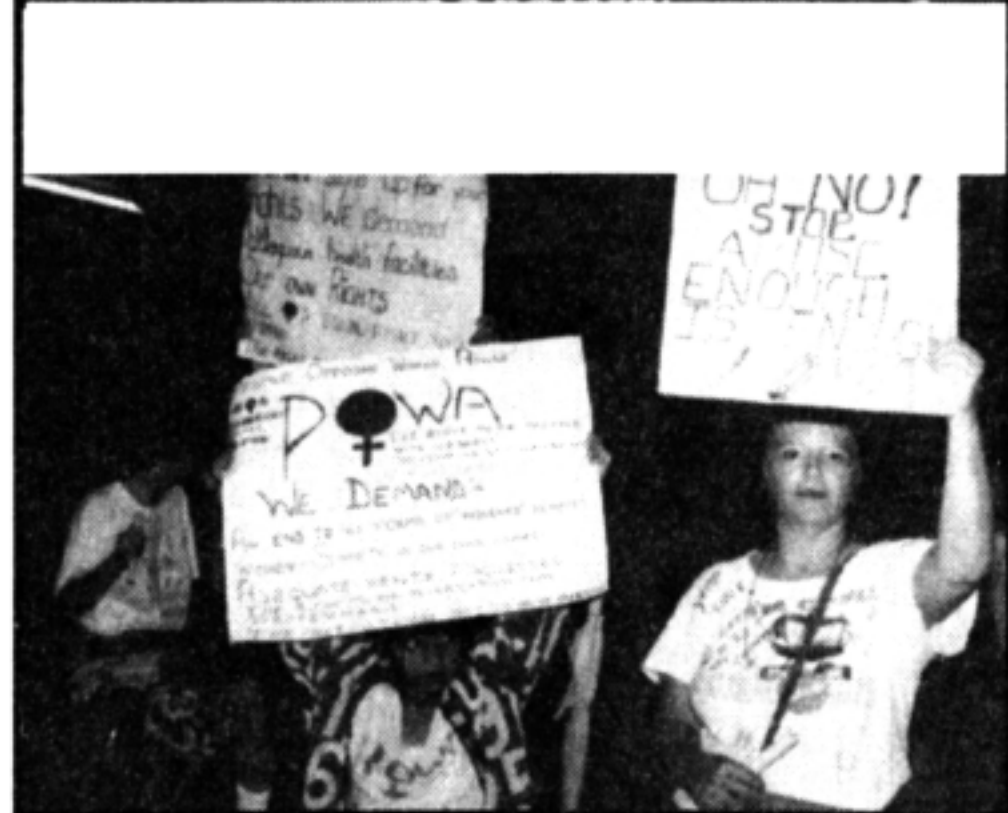
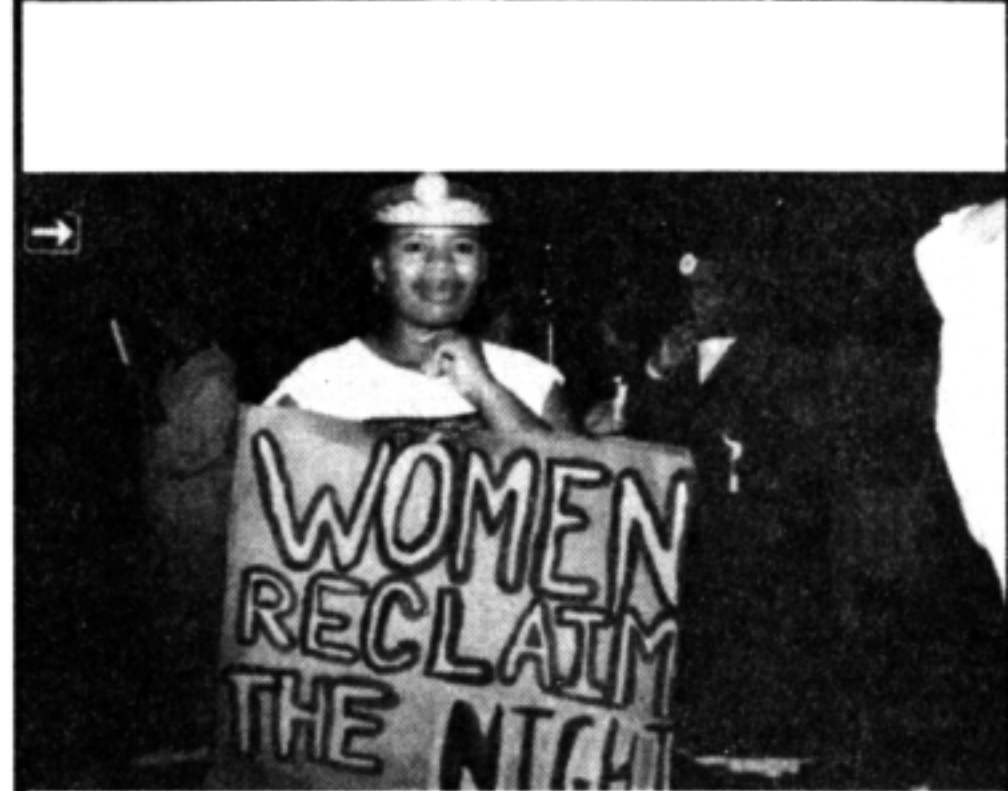
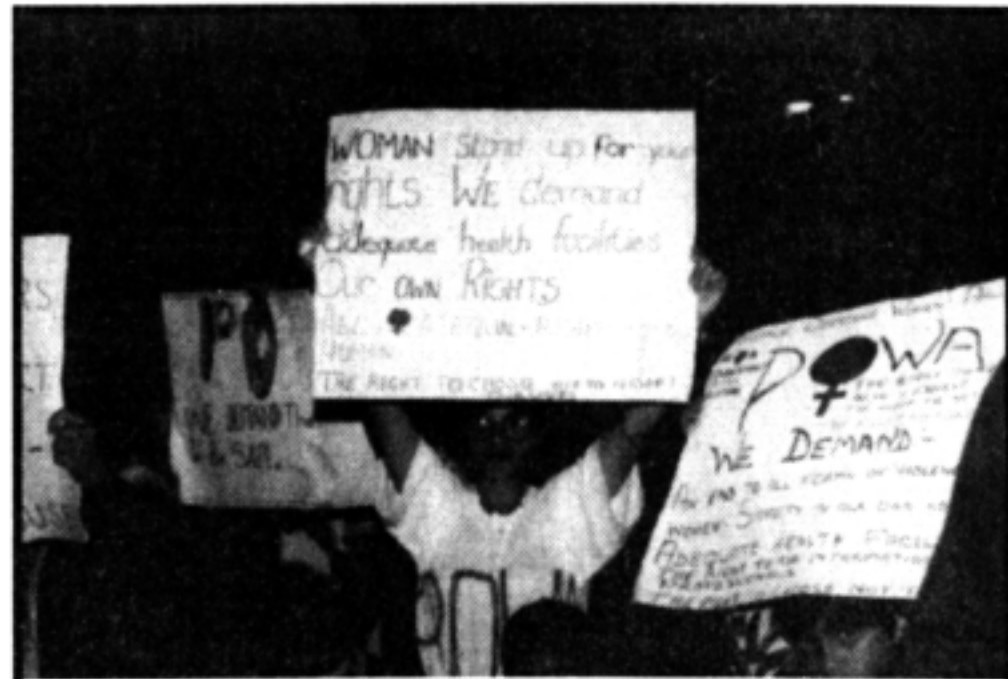
The march took place at night to make a point. Night-time is when women are most afraid to be alone on the streets. By marching at night women wanted to reclaim the night. They demanded the right to feel safe from violence from men in all places and at all times.

Bobby Rodwell, chairperson of the Interim Johannesburg Zonal Committee of the ANC Women's League spoke about why they spearheaded this march. She said: "We wanted to bring attention to the high rate of violence against women in South Africa. We cannot build a new society on this kind of violence."

## Uniting all women

The ANC Women's League invited many organisations to join the candle-light march, including Azanian Peoples' Organisation (AZAPO), Pan African Congress (PAC) and Inkatha. They felt the issue of violence against women could bring women from different organisations together. But to many it did just seem like an ANC march - most of the people on the march were ANC members or came from organisations sympathetic to the ANC.

One woman said: "I felt quite out of place on the march. First of all I am not an ANC member. I support AZAPO. I went on the march to show solidarity with all women on the issue of



Women take back the night on International Women's Day  
The candle light march was organised by the Johannesburg Zone of the ANC Women's League with POWA, SADWU, GLOW Women's Group, SHOC, Five Freedom's Forum, International Prayer Women's League, COSATU Women's Forum, Black Sash, ANC Youth League Women's Group.

Photos : Ann Hilton





just any march. I also objected to the way in which men took over on the march. I don't think they should have been there at all - they are the ones who abuse women."

Bobby agreed that the march was dominated by the ANC. But this was not the intention. They had invited organisations with many different political views to join. She said: "We were marching as women opposed to violence and we were not only ANC ... although most people on the march were ANC supporters ... it shows that we need to strengthen our women's movement and develop our own identity to make us feel united as women".

### **Men on the march**

On the subject of men being on the march Bobby said: "I don't agree that men should not have been on the march. I think that many men are concerned about the issue. Also, I believe for those men who have not thought about the issue it will raise their awareness. I think it is a pity that some men did dominate proceedings on the march - that shows how much work we have to do. But I think women's issues are men's issues too."

Norman Reed, chairperson of the Hillbrow/Berea ANC Branch said he felt the march was very important to make men aware of what women go through as women. "This march is long overdue," he said. "Men must respect and value women. There is a thing when a woman is

Women's demands are put on the agenda of the liberation struggle like never before.

Photo : Tammy Shefer

pregnant the man never wishes for a girl. He always wishes for a boy. All I wish for is a healthy child. Women experience pain which men will never experience."

### **Lots of education work still to do**

It wasn't so clear that all the men understood as well as Norman what the march was about. Many of them thought the candles looked very pretty. Many of them toyi-toyed at the back, urging people to join the ANC. Yes, there is still a lot of education work to do. Men must understand the difference between a recruiting drive for a political party and a march to demand an end to violence against women. Hopefully men listened carefully to the speeches at the end of the march. The organisers did make special note that it seemed to be men making all the noise during and before the speeches!

### **An important beginning**

The march was an important beginning. It made many South Africans aware that March 8 is International Women's Day. It brought the issue of the violence against women by men - whether in government, as bosses, fellow male



comrades, husbands or lovers - out into the open. And it showed those committed to a non-sexist future that there is a great deal of education around women's oppression still to do. The march in Hillbrow, and those all over South Africa on International Women's Day, marked the beginning of that education. Maybe a seed was sown that will grow into a strong women's movement to fight for women's rights as human rights. ☺

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## **ANC Women's League takes up campaign against violence**

The African National Congress (ANC) Consultative Conference held in December 1990 decided as part of its programme of action to mark March 8, International Women's Day. The ANC Campaigns Committee decided the marking of the day should be spearheaded by the ANC Women's League.

The ANC Women's League task force and regional and zonal committees decided that the issue of focus for this day should be violence against women.

In working out their programme of action the PWV region of the ANC Women's League discussed the issue of violence against women. They talked about state violence, violence in the home, sexual harassment and sexual abuse. The women noted very strongly that: "Violence, like wifebeating, is not part of traditional culture. It is often excused as being part of tradition and custom. This is not so."

They felt the ANC should hold workshops for men and women in branches on the issue of violence against women. ☺

# **Why do we celebrate March 8 as International Women's Day?**

Eighty years ago, on March 8, thousands of people marched in New York City. It was a funeral march to bury 175 women textile workers who had jumped to their deaths a few days earlier. A fire had broken out in the Triangle Shirt Factory in which they worked. But they were trapped inside because management had locked all the doors to prevent theft. The factory was crowded with women workers and machines to cut costs and increase production. The women had no choice but to burn to death or jump out of the blazing building. 175 of them died. Most of these young women belonged to migrant families from Europe.

March 8 began as a day of mourning for those women workers. It has become a day for women to unite in action all over the world. A day to celebrate as well as to mourn.

A day to remember the strong fighting women of our country and other countries, for they have helped to bring us closer to freedom. Lilian Ngoyi, Liz Abrahams, Helen Joseph, Emily Pankhurst, Alexandra Kollontai, Rosa Luxemburg and more, many more. Most of them hidden from the history books.

A day to celebrate the victories that have been won for women. In some countries, the right to free, safe abortions. In others, the right for women to vote.

A day to state what victories women still want to win to free themselves from slavery and abuse. ☺



# Single or married- are there any answers ?

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*Single women and men face a problem. Society discriminates against them because they are not married. But married people don't seem to have it much easier. Some men and women give their views on this.*

---

Themba is married with eight children. He said: "Bachelors usually think they are better than us married men because they can go out wherever they want to at anytime they want to. It is us who take care of the unmarried. But they look down upon us and say we are hooked behind our wife's back.

## **Marriage brings status**

"But at times we married men do look down upon single men as 'things' who are running away from responsibilities. Actually, they are not even recognised as men. Because what will a man stay unmarried for? Surely something must be wrong with him."

Sakhile said that in Zulu culture unmarried men are not seen as people but as things who form part of the community.

"Take for instance when we drink 'Umqombothi' traditional beer and we are sitting around as men," he said "we do not recognise unmarried men as we usually talk about our wives and families. So what can these unmarried men talk about?

Girlfriends and them taking other people's wives, which is nothing else but foolishness."

But there are single men who feel good about being single. William is one of them. He said: "I am very lucky not to be married. I have no wife, no children. Everything I do comes from me." William seemed to be a happy bachelor, you could see the happiness written on his face.

## **Being single**

Many single women don't want to get married. Nomsa, who is single, felt very strongly about this. She said: "I was born to live my own life. I do not want any man to control me."

But staying single is not without its problems. Single women said they were not treated with the same respect that married women enjoy. They were seen by their community as having something wrong with them, simply because they were not married. In this way they felt a great deal of pressure to get married, even though they don't want to.

Jane spoke about this problem. She said: "This kind of pressure to get married does not





Photo : SPEAK

only come from men, but from women as well."

Nhlanhla, who is married and a father of four, saw single women in a different way. He said that single women are the most privileged and they play a key role in the society. He believes they should not be discriminated against.

"Single women are actually good," he said, "and they play an important role and should not

be looked down upon."

Single women felt discriminated against. But married women didn't feel happy about being married. Before they got married everything was fine in their relationships, they said, but after marriage, things turned bad.

Thandi is married. She said: "Bheki hasn't been the same ever since we got married. He started going to parties on his own and he comes home after twelve midnight every night."

None of the women had a good word to say about married life. They said their houses have become little hells.

Joyce said: "I cannot even go to town without asking for permission from my husband. I feel like a prisoner in my house."

### Blaming society

When asked why there is a difference between how single people and married people are treated, everybody blames society.

As John said: "Society blames women for so many things in life. Unmarried women are discriminated against as if it is a bad thing not to be married. If we change the way people think about marriage, women will stop feeling guilty about it, because nobody will bother them about being unmarried anymore." ❁

I think the world must start reading **NEW GROUND** to avoid this

Absolutely, I agree with you

# New Ground

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Number 3, March 1991

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# Organising around AIDS

*Condoms, those things that people make jokes about and kids use as balloons, are turning out to be life-savers. Condoms help to prevent the spread of AIDS. You can't tell people about aids or condoms without talking openly about sex. This is not always easy, but it has started because people are worried about AIDS*

There is a growing worry about how quickly AIDS is spreading in all countries in the world. In South Africa there have been more than six hundred reported cases of people with AIDS. 250 of these have already died. More than 10 000 people are infected with the HIV virus which leads to AIDS. These are only the reported cases. Health workers believe that the number of people infected is much higher, both in the cities and in the rural areas. Health workers say that in South Africa these numbers double every eight and a half months. AIDS has to be taken seriously.

## **Township AIDS Project**

The Township AIDS Project (TAP) was started because of the problem of AIDS in this country. TAP recently held a workshop in Soweto to discuss how women can organise around AIDS. Condoms and attitudes about sex were two of the many subjects that were spoken about.

## Talk about AIDS before it hits home.

"I really don't have to tell kids about AIDS. They're too busy about it in school."  
"Who else tells AIDS to them, Johnson?"  
"He is a god!"  
"If I talk to them about AIDS, they'll think it's okay to have sex."



If you're thinking any of these thoughts, you're not doing all you should to protect your teenager from AIDS.

Do not put your own discomfort and your fear of embarrassing your child.

Just sit down and tell them the facts. Tell them that you just can't be sure who has the AIDS virus. Sometimes it can be carried for years without any symptoms.

Tell them that since they can't possibly know who's infected they must use precautions to protect themselves.

Tell them if they're having sex, they must always use a condom. And not having sex is still the best protection.

Tell them that AIDS is incurable, there's no vaccine, and once you get it you'll likely die.

Then tell them it's preventable.

Tell them everything you can about AIDS. But make sure you tell them why.

Because by the time you think they're old enough to know, it's just might be too late.

**AIDS**  
If you think you can't get it, you're dead wrong.

NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND MENTAL HYGIENE, DIVISION OF AIDS PREVENTION AND CONTROL

## **Talking about sex**

Sex is a subject that has been kept behind closed doors for a long time. But because AIDS is passed mainly through sex this is changing. People are beginning to talk more openly about both sex and condoms. Condoms are known to help prevent the spread of the HIV virus which causes AIDS.

## **Resistance to talking about sex**

Some parents believe if they talk about sex openly their kids will want to go out and do it. Some people think sex is too private to talk about. But a growing number of people now understand that to prevent the spread of AIDS and save the lives of children and adults of all races, classes and sexes we have to talk openly about both sex and condoms. These issues were talked about at the TAP workshop on AIDS.

## **Problems with sexual relationships**

People at the workshop spoke about the problem that women have in sexual relationships. They said men dominate



sexual relationships in our society.

Women at the workshop spoke about how they have very little control over sex. They said it is men who control women's sex lives. It is seen as the man's right to have sex whenever he wants to, and with whoever he wants to. A man who sleeps with many women is seen as a big, strong guy, but a woman who sleeps with many men is seen as a loose woman with no morals.

People at the workshop said that this idea has to be challenged. Women have a right to say 'no'. And a right to demand that the men they sleep with use condoms. But everybody agreed that this was easier said than done.

Many women at the workshop said they were afraid to do this. One woman said: "As soon as I take the condom out the man thinks I must be sick - that I must have AIDS or a sexually transmitted disease (STD)."

Husbands and boyfriends who sleep around can infect their partners

with the HIV virus. In Zimbabwe half of the women with AIDS got the virus from their husbands who had been unfaithful to them. Faithful wives and girlfriends become the victims of men's sexual behaviour.

Nombeko Mazibuko of the Planned Parenthood Association had this to say: "Don't dump it anymore on women's shoulders. Men must be educated. Men must take responsibility too."

### Promote a condom culture

Some people like condoms, some don't. People's culture and attitude come into it. You get men saying that if they use condoms their friends will laugh at them. You get women saying that boyfriends or husbands accuse them of sleeping around if they ask them to use condoms. And you get women and men saying that condoms take some of the fun out of sex. But people at the workshop felt the bottom line is that condoms can save your life.

People spoke about how women have to stand up to men and challenge their sexual behaviour as part of the fight against AIDS. Women must demand the right to equal and





A poster from Zambia with a message for men.

safe sex. But progressive men must be part of educating other men. They must help to change the traditional attitude of men towards women.

Women must learn to talk to men about sex and about using condoms. They must educate men that the use of condoms is for the benefit of both partners.

### Organising to prevent AIDS

The meeting came up with some ways women can encourage the use of condoms. They are also ways in which women can begin to gain control over their sex lives.

\* Women who are sexually involved with men should carry condoms in their bags. They should not feel shy about this.

\* Women should not wait until they are in the bedroom to talk about sex and condoms. They should speak to their husband or boyfriend at another time, before starting to have sex.

\* Every woman must understand that her body belongs to her and nobody else. She has a right to say no to sex. This is a right that must be understood by men as well. Women must learn to talk and behave in a very confident way to men who want to have sex with them, or to men they would like to have sex with.

\* The leaders in organisations and popular people, like soccer stars, should encourage men to use condoms.

\* Factories that make condoms should not only make white colour condoms. They should also make condoms that go with the colour of different skins.

### A struggle for men and women

Women are beginning to take forward the struggle against AIDS. They say men must also take responsibility for this. Men and women have to develop more meaningful, safe and responsible sexual relationships. This alone will begin to save lives as well as improve the quality of life.☺



A poster from Uganda. The message is clear.



# Taking AIDS Seriously

Adapted from Pannos, November 1989.

***AIDS is taken very seriously in Uganda, where many people have already died from the disease.***

Many children in Uganda have lost one or both their parents from AIDS. The result is that many teenage girls are saying 'no' to sexual advances from boys. And boys are beginning to understand why.

## **'No' means 'no'**

Jackie Odoch is an 18-year-old secondary school student in Kampala, Uganda. She says: "Boys really put pressure on you and if you are weak, you'll definitely weaken to do what a boy says. He'll say: 'I'd like to have sex with you. You won't get AIDS. I do not have AIDS' - and he'll tell you all sorts of things that you'll believe. But some girls say a strong 'no' and they mean 'no.' The boys will come to believe that such a girl means what she says."

## **Schoolgirls with older men**

Some schoolgirls still give in to the attention of older men, Jackie says. "The girls feel that what they have is not enough, they want more from life."

To schoolgirls it may seem like a good idea to get involved with older men, or to leave school to marry. But the good things don't always last long. The men often get bored with the younger women who don't have an education they can fall back on.

## **Girls should stick to education**

An organisation called AFCODE visits schools in Uganda to talk to girls about AIDS. They say: "We tell girls they should look at themselves as individual people. They should not look at boys as their future. They should stick to their education and forget all about sex."



## **New ideas and love and marriage**

The worry about AIDS is leading to new ideas about love and marriage. Jackie Odach expects a lot from her future husband. She says: "I expect him to be faithful to me, but I can't say he'll definitely be faithful to me. So during our marriage we'll make AIDS one of the lessons in our family, so that we can talk about it, so that my husband will not take the chance to go out and have other women. Instead we should try to satisfy each other sexually so that we do not have the urge to go out and have relationships with other people."

## **Challenging the men**

Married women are also challenging husbands who sleep with other women. Wives are growing more assertive, say some men. A middle-aged man sitting in a drinking club has this to say: "Ladies tend to think that men are freer than them. Sometimes these days when you go home they ask you 'where have you been?' That was a very rare question in the past."

His friend agrees. "My wife says to me: 'I'm scared about AIDS. You man, you go drinking and you come back through some dubious places. One day you're going to bring me trouble.' And I say: 'No, no. Where I drink it's men only. And from there I come straight home.' And in that way I hope I've struck a compromise with my wife."☺

# Can women lead ?

*Almost two years have passed since COSATU took a resolution to promote women in leadership*

*Women make up 36% of COSATU's membership but the leadership still does not reflect this. Will COSATU commit itself to more concrete action on the issue at its fourth congress in July this year?*



Jeremy Basckin says in a book soon to be published that women leaders still remain painfully absent from all levels in the unions and in the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) itself. He thinks the situation is getting worse. He found that of the 83 office bearers at national level of all COSATU's affiliates, only eight are women. At the 1989 Congress there were 36 COSATU regional office bearers. All of them were men. Two years later, one of them is a woman, Lucy Nyembe.

## Why?

Why are there so few women in leadership positions? Culture, tradition, sexist attitudes and the double load are all part of the system of male domination that keeps women down.

Lucy Nyembe says: "Society does not prepare women for leadership in the way that it prepares men for leadership.

"There is this idea that women are emotional and not able to strategise and give clear direction. That's not true ... if women can organise in the union like they do at home, we can have very strong women leaders."

Men are brought up to be leaders. Women are brought up to follow men, as

second class citizens. They are not expected to lead or make decisions. And because of this most women do not believe it is possible that they can. Many do not even try. For those women who do, it is a long battle to be accepted as leaders by other women and by men. They have to do the job better than men just to prove they can do it.

## Lack of support

Busi Xaba and Dorothy Mokgalo are both shopstewards in the National Union of Metal Workers of South Africa (NUMSA). They spoke of the problem of lack of support for women leaders.

Busi said often men do not support women. She said: "I was elected as a shopsteward ... there were so many people who would have preferred a man, because of tradition."

Dorothy said when it comes to elections, women will usually elect men, even though there might be women who can take on the position. "I think that the problem lies within us women," said Dorothy. "We still have that belief in us that men should be the only leaders."

Often women are shy to speak out in public, especially in front of men.



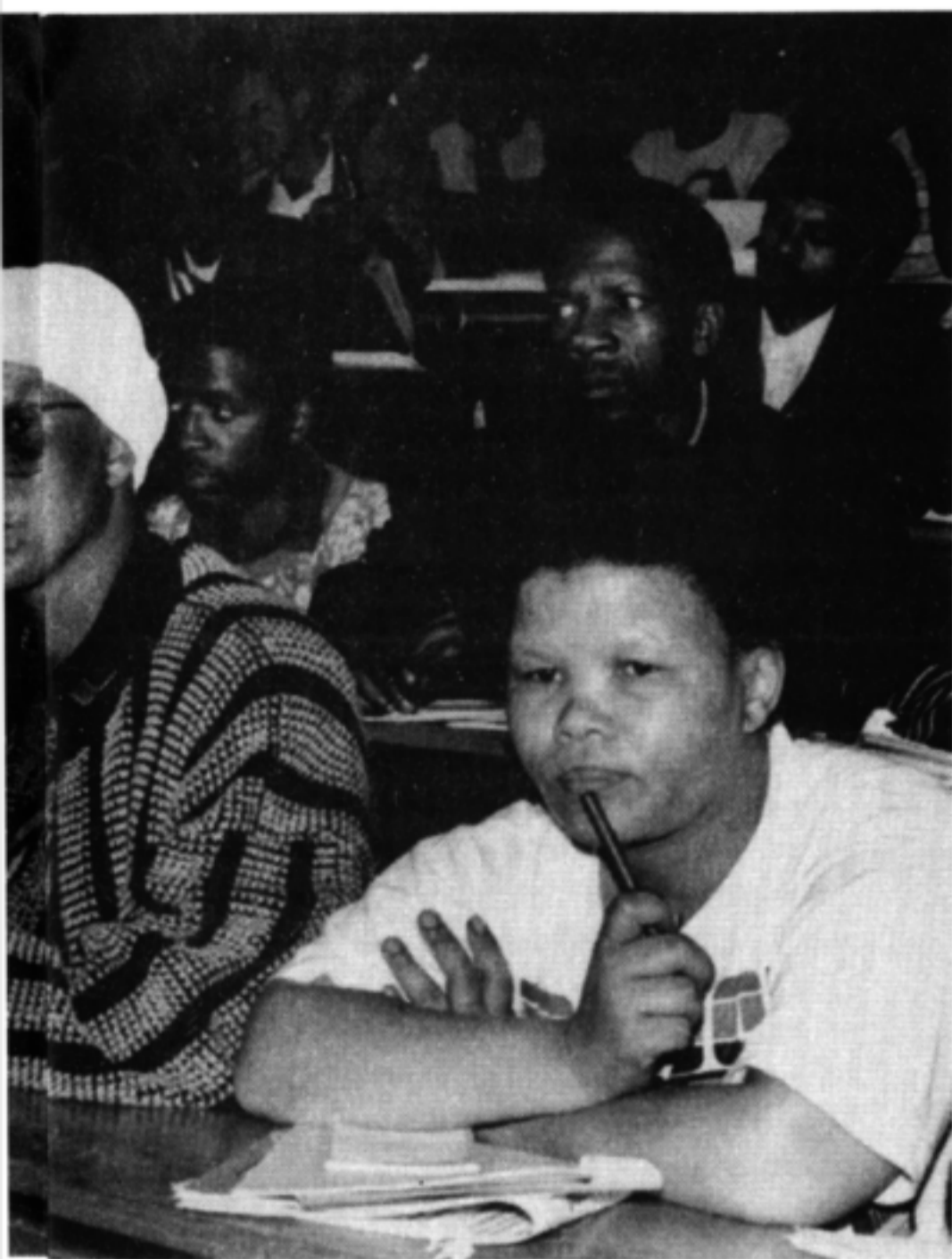


Photo: COSATU  
**Women delegates at COSATU  
 Campaigns Conference in  
 Johannesburg in 1990**

Many women play an important part in building the union but this is hidden because women are not seen at the top. Maggie Magubane is National Coordinator of NUMSA Women Workers Sub-committee. She says: "As long as men are on top they are happy. But for some of the jobs they cannot budge without us."

#### **Why do we need women leaders?**

Diane de Vries of the South African Domestic Workers Union (SADWU) in the Western Cape says: "Because women are being represented by men, women's issues are always on the bottom of the negotiating table. That is why the woman must be there to make sure her demands are on the negotiating table."

#### **Challenge to COSATU**

When the fourth COSATU Congress takes place in July this year, will there be more women delegates than in 1989? Will any of COSATU's capable women leaders get voted onto COSATU's executive? Or will women continue to be the ladder for the men to get to the top? ☉

### **Women's Forums build women's leadership skills**

Some unions in COSATU have organised women's forums where women meet together to build women's leadership skills and confidence. At these workshops women have asked - why are women kept back? They see some of the reasons for this as:

- \* Women have a double load as mothers and workers which leaves little time to be active in the union. Men need to share the load at home so that women can be active.
  - \* Union meetings are often not held at times that suit women.
  - \* Traditional ideas say that men are the leaders, not women. This makes women lack confidence to speak out and say what they think.
  - \* Male comrades do not show an interest in women's issues. These issues get put last on the agenda of meetings, if at all.
  - \* Women need education and skills on how to lead.
  - \* Women need to build confidence in and encourage other women as leaders.
  - \* Male comrades dominate meetings and don't listen to what women comrades say.
  - \* Women end up cooking, making tea and taking minutes at meetings. This stops them from being able to participate fully.
  - \* Women get harassed by men in the union and men use their power as leaders to get involved sexually with women comrades. This often ends in problems which cause women to stop her involvement in the union.
  - \* Male comrades are not interested in women's problems and don't attend women's meetings so they are not in touch with how women suffer and what issues need to be put on the union's agenda.
  - \* There is not enough education on gender issues. Both men and women comrades need education on these issues.
- Tackling these issues is a challenge to all organisations that believe women should take their rightful place as equals next to men. It means turning words into action. ☉

# May 28 International

fo



In 1990 women took action all over the world on May 28. They handed out posters, stickers and pamphlets, performed plays, held poetry readings and workshops. They wanted to make people aware of the unnecessary suffering of women in relation to health problems, and to organise women to fight for health rights. Women organised in this way in South and Central America, India, the Philippines, Africa, Canada, U.S.A., England, Greece, Norway, Holland, Spain. For 1991 the international campaign committee calls on all women everywhere to mark this day. They say: "On 28 May this year we appeal for every voice to be raised in the struggle to dignify women's health care." SPEAK calls on women all over South Africa to take action on this day.





# International Day of Action for Women's Health

Women want to be treated with dignity and respect  
Women want accessible, humanized and competent health services.

Let's prevent maternal mortality,  
Let's put a stop to maternal morbidity

## Fourth Call to Women for Action



International Campaign 1991  
International Day of Action for Women's Health  
28th May 1991

In 1987 women all over the world began to take action on May 28 - the International Day of Action for Women's Health. By organising on this day women's organisations have brought attention to problems women face in relation to pregnancy and child birth. In the poor countries of the world and in the poor parts of rich countries, women die everyday or are scarred for life as a result of problems related to pregnancy and childbirth.

Often women see these problems as "natural" - as "part of life." But these unnecessary deaths and sufferings can be stopped. And women are saying they must be stopped. Women must demand that those in politics, in the government, trade unions, and health professions address these issues. Since women began to act on

these issues more information on women's health has been uncovered. But there is a lot more information to uncover. For example on backstreet abortion and the scars left on women when childbirth goes wrong. We need more information on these things so that we can take action and put an end to these things.

The Women's Global Network for Reproductive Rights has coordinated action on women's health. They put out a news magazine on women's health with the Latin American and Caribbean Women's Health Network. The magazine puts together important information that can be used as a basis for campaigns and education. To link into this network and to get the magazines of both these networks write to:

\* Women's Global Network for Reproductive Rights, NWZ Voorburgwal 32, 1012 RZ Amsterdam, Netherlands.

\* Latin American and Caribbean Women's Health Network/ISIS International, Casilla 2067, Correo Central, Santiago, Chile.

# Liz Abrahams

## veteran trade unionist



**Liz Abrahams has been at the forefront of the struggle for liberation in South Africa for more than fifty years. Looking at the struggle today she says: "Freedom is not around the corner. For me, the struggle has just begun."**

Liz is sixty-five years old. She is a strong and capable woman who has the flame of justice burning in her heart. At the young age of fourteen, she was a worker in a fruit canning factory in Paarl in the Western Cape. Her involvement in unions started then. She was elected as a worker leader in the factory and became very involved in the union. In those days her union was called the Food and Canning Workers Union (FCWU), later to become the Food and Allied Workers Union (FAWU).

### **No time to rest**

In the 1960's Liz was banned by the government for five years and she has been detained many times. Liz was the National General Secretary for FAWU for eight years.

She left the union three years ago to build a civic organisation in Paarl East, where she lives. She is chairperson of the ANC Paarl branch and co-ordinator of the ANC Women's League.

### **Women led**

Liz spoke of her past work in the union, where the majority of workers in the food industry were, and still are, women. The women workers were very active. She said: "Us women were always upfront. We led and the men were very supportive. But we often had to explain to them why we were doing this or that." The problems she talked of are problems women still face today. Liz said that organising workers was not always easy.



Husbands were one problem. Fear of dismissal was another. Liz said: "Husbands were not happy about their wives going to meetings on a Sunday. In those days there weren't as many strikes like now because the fear of dismissals was greater and work was even scarcer."

Organising work meant being out late at night. "We had to walk home at night but if any worker saw anyone interfere with me they would say: 'leave her alone, that's our mama union'."

Liz had problems of her own as well. She said her husband, who died five years ago, was not in the least bit interested in politics. This was a problem for her because he did not like her always being at meetings. But Liz's mother helped to make it possible for her to continue her organising work. Liz said: "I was lucky. My mother was a very big support for me and did the cooking and washing of my husband's clothes."

### **People need education**

Liz is worried about the future. She said: "People think now that the ANC has been unbanned it means they can get more money, houses and cars overnight. This is not going to happen. Organisations should explain and have workshops on this issue. I foresee problems in our future government and there will be

demonstrations and strikes. Nothing is going to change overnight. This is what we have to make people understand. Freedom is not around the corner. For me, the struggle has just begun."

Liz said she wishes in her day there was harder work done to educate people.

### **Lots still to do**

After all these years of building organisation and fighting for the liberation of workers, does Liz have any regrets?

Her answer is a big no. She said: "In fact, I always say to myself I wish I could do it all over again and this time work harder." Liz gave a smile and added: "I have so much more to do. People really need education, especially on the farms where people can't read or write."

### **A message from Liz**

Liz has a message for trade unionists today. It is: "What I have learnt is don't ever lie to the workers, it will backfire. If you don't know the answer to any question say so, never make empty promises. That is my advice to unionists today."☺



Photos : Afrapix



Exiles returning at Jan Smuts Airport on 7 March 1991

# Welcome Home

Welcome home comrades from exile!  
We celebrate with you the victory of our joint struggle. Together, progressive South Africans have brought about the beginning of the end of apartheid.

We celebrate the joy and happiness of family, friends and comrades reunited. We mourn the loss of those who died in exile.

It is not an easy time to return, for although apartheid is slowly dying, capitalism is not. You return at a time when millions are unemployed, housing shortages are huge and poverty is widespread. The unbanning of political organisations has not changed this. South Africa is still a violent society.

Together we will have to fight some more. We will have to fight until there is equality, peace, hope and shared wealth in South Africa. A luta continua! ☪

Photos : Afrapix





# Independence yes, but not for women??

*This poem was  
written by a  
group of  
women who  
used to be  
soldiers in the  
Zimbabwe  
liberation army*



When I got home  
from the war  
I realized  
our tradition had not changed  
we were still second to men  
being told  
what to do

We had to wash and to cook  
and to clean the house  
we had to bear a child every year

When I risked my life during the war  
I thought  
liberation was meant  
for men and women...  
indeed we got rid  
of the white oppressor  
but today I see  
we women are still not free

We have to wash and to cook  
and to clean the house  
we have to bear a child every year!

But as a person cannot walk  
with only one leg  
this country cannot develop  
without us!  
We are Zimbabwe's second leg  
we are needed  
oh yes, we are!  
Equality - dignity and love:  
Equality!

## The Women's Health Project

The Women's Health Project is a new project based at the Centre for Health Policy in the Community Health Department at Wits University in Johannesburg. The project aims to make contact with others working in women's health and with women's groups to develop policy on things like contraception, AIDS, abortion, etc. It will also make available information about women's health. The project hopes to bring out a booklet.

If you are interested in this project phone Barbara at (011) 647 2635 or write to :  
The Women's Health Project,  
CHP, Community Health,  
Wits Medical School,  
7 York Road,  
Parktown 2193.

VOLUME 21  
NUMBER 2  
FEBRUARY 1990

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# 'Sharing the Load'

*An exciting new book with a vision of the new South Africa.*



Women and men workers, shop-stewards and union officials from the South African Commercial, Catering and Allied Workers Union (SACCAWU) speak out in this book about their struggle for gender equality, parental rights and childcare.

## **Struggle and victory**

The book is rich in workers' experiences. Workers and union officials tell of their lives of struggle and challenge to build the union since early 1970's. They tell of the fight by workers for their rights: the right to organise as workers in trade unions, the right to decent wages and working conditions, the right for workers to be parents.

In the 1970's women workers who became pregnant were not protected. If they did not lose their jobs, they were forced to work under very difficult

conditions. Women workers tell of these painful and desperate times - no job security and being forced to leave a tiny baby at home to go back to work.

## **The joke was on the bosses**

The book tells of how the union's demand for a maternity agreement was first treated as a joke by OK Bazaars bosses. They said it was a 'ridiculous demand'. The workers didn't think so. After a bitter struggle, maternity agreements were signed in the early 1980's with OK Bazaars, CNA and Woolworths. This was a real breakthrough. Women workers were protected from losing their jobs when they became pregnant. They were guaranteed their jobs back when they came back from their 12 months unpaid maternity leave. But that was not enough. The union asked many questions. What use was unpaid leave? Why should women be punished for having babies? In fact,



why should women be the ones to carry the load of children and housework?

### **No such thing as 'women's work'?**

The union challenged the idea of childcare and housework being 'women's work'. They saw that this was part of women's oppression.

They saw that men have a responsibility to share the load - of children and housework. Fathers as well as mothers have the right to be parents - to time off at the time of the birth, and to time off to see to their children when they are sick or in need.

This was the beginning of the demand for and winning some parental rights. SACCAWU forged ahead. The book tells of how the union did this.

### **The home front**

The book is also a story about love. Josephine Sithole and her husband Christopher began to have problems in their marriage because Josephine was getting involved in her union. Christopher talks



"Sharing the Load" is a joint publication by Learn and Teach, SACCAWU and LACOM. To buy a copy send R6.00 to Learn and Teach Publications, PO Box 556, Johannesburg 2000.

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***"Fathers as well as mothers have a right to time off at the time of a birth and to time off to see to their children when they are sick or in need."***

***"Today there are few men who share, but in ten years time there will be many more."***

---

about how he felt at the time: "I knew things were not right with Josephine and me ... I felt like I wasn't important to her anymore. She was spending so much time with the union people and when she came home she only had time for the children. I felt confused - while I knew I was not playing my part with the kids and the housework, I was hurting inside. I felt I had lost control of my wife, my family, and my house." Josephine and Christopher talk about how they sorted things out between them.

### **How to put words into action?**

The book takes a hard and clear look at how women are oppressed in society, and why this has led to so few women in leadership positions at all levels in the union. It also points to the fact that real equality means having to change many things so that women can be equals, both in union life and in home life. In this chapter many problems are raised, and possible ways of solving them are written about.

Georgina Mbileni, who was interviewed in the book spoke at the launch of the book in Johannesburg recently. She said: "With time all these things that are being started will work. It is still a new idea, but people will get used to the idea and accept it. Today there are few men who share, but in 10 years time there will be many more!"

### **A book of hope and debate**

SACCAWU hopes the book will raise debate. This it certainly will do. It is a book of challenge and inspiration. It puts gender equality on the agenda and is valuable for anybody involved in the struggle for human rights.☺

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# Being a woman can be bad for your health

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*Women are second class citizens in their country and in their homes. How does this affect their health? Indu Capoor, from India, spoke at the 6th International Women and Health Meeting held in the Philippines in November 1990 about the ways in which girls' and women's health suffer because of tradition and laws. A representative of SPEAK was there to listen to Indu's talk.*

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Indu works with an organisation called the Centre for Health Education Training and Nutrition Awareness (CHETNA). She told women at the conference that teenage pregnancy affects young women's lives very badly. It is tradition for girls to be married young, very often while they are teenagers. Pregnancy usually follows soon after marriage. This affects the health of the young teenage girls when most people do not get enough food to eat and most people do not enjoy good health. Pregnancy followed by more pregnancies wears down the strength of young women. They grow old and sick before their time.

## **Lives of serving**

Indu spoke about how traditional ideas about women's role as home-maker and producer of babies, especially the demand for sons, affects their health. She said that women are expected to see to the well-being of the children and the family. They get very little time to see to their own needs, because they spend their whole

lives seeing to the needs of others. This is what men and tradition expect of them even though it means that women's health suffers.

Society looks down on a woman who has not given birth to a child within the first year of marriage. If the woman does not produce a child, she is not seen as a real woman. Because of lack of education people are not aware that men as well as women can be infertile.

In India it is most important that a woman gives birth to a son. She gets more respect, care and status in the community if she produces a boy. Because there is no education around this, women believe it is their fault if they have a girl instead of a boy. This is not true. It is the man's sperm and not the woman's egg that influences the sex of the baby. Yet it is the women who are blamed.

## **Health laws don't protect women**

Indu spoke about the health laws in India. She said that the laws to do with women's





Graphic from Women in Action. Photo from New Internationalist



**Tradition demands girls marry young .So young girls get pregnant and soon grow old and sick before their time. Women in India are fighting the traditions that keep them down . CHETNA is one organisation that fights the oppression women face in every part of their lives.**

health do not protect women. The Indian government has a strict population control policy. They want couples only to have one or two children. Most families want to have boy babies, because boys are seen as having more worth than girls. There is a test that can be done on pregnant women to tell what the sex of the baby is before it is born. In Bombay, India, researchers found that of 5 000 women who had this test and found that they were pregnant with girls, 4 999 aborted the baby. Abortion is legal in India. But it is not good for a woman's health to have many abortions. The pressure on

women to give birth to boys affects women's mental and physical health.

Women are given contraception without choice. They are not told about the good and bad things about the different types of contraception. And contraception is seen as women's responsibility. .

Indu said the big problem for women is lack of education and not being able to read and write. Women do not have information that will empower them in their own lives. She believes this has to change if women are to move forward.

### **Eat last, and least**

Traditionally the girls and women in a family eat last, and get the leftovers. There is the idea that pregnant women should eat less so they give more space for the baby to grow in. This is not true. Pregnant women should have plenty of healthy food and rest.

Girls are brought up to believe that good food is bad for them. The male child is breastfed for longer. Male children and men get the best and most of the food. And so male children get a



**Women all over the world are realising that women's health is related to the way women are treated and seen generally.**

graphic : adapted from Spare Rib

better start in life. In fact they get a better deal all through their lives. This way of life is one of the reasons why boys grow up to believe they are better than girls. And why men expect women to obey them and see to their every need.

The Indian government does not put much money into women's health, said Indu. Most women feel shy to go to male doctors, especially about things to do with pregnancy and childbirth. But society favours educating men and not women, so most doctors in India are men. This puts women off from going to the doctor, especially for women's health problems. This cuts down women's access to health services and affects the well-being of women in the society.

Health services look more at treating people than stopping them from getting sick. This is partly because medicine companies make more money out of sick people than healthy people. Traditional treatments, which are usually practised and controlled by women, are not taken seriously. The other big problem is that rural areas are forgotten about. Ninety percent of doctors work in the towns and cities, not in the villages.

### **Lack of independence from men**

Indu spoke of the way in which lack of independence from men really holds women back. Women are expected to bow down to men, especially in the rural areas. Women are expected to be polite to and agree with men and not to hold views of their own. Women seldom have money of their own. This dependence on men for money stops women from being able to be more independent in their own lives.

Women have very low education and few job opportunities. When there are jobs for women, they get unskilled work with low wages. Women have little money and are not able to buy much. It is difficult for a woman to borrow money. She cannot buy a house if she is not married. She has no control over the family income. She is a second class citizen in her country and her home.

### **Very little say in politics**

Women have very little or no representation in the village, state, national or international decision-making bodies in India.

Indu said another problem is that women are shy to share and talk about their experiences. She feels strongly that this must change for women to challenge the gender oppression that affects every part of their lives.

### **Organising for change**

CHETNA is an organisation that is committed to helping this happen. CHETNA wants to help empower Indian women so that they have control over their lives. Through workshops, seminars, education programmes and projects, CHETNA works towards empowering women to take a stand against being second class citizens in the land of their birth. Indu and CHETNA are fighting for a country and a world in which being a woman is not bad for your health.☺



**International women's health conference**  
 354 women from 63 countries met in the Philippines for the Sixth International Women and Health Meeting in November 1990. It was hosted by the Philippines Organising Committee which is made up of women from different progressive women's organisations in the Philippines. The conference was a week long and it gave a chance for women from all over the world to meet, hear about, share and discuss women's health issues. SPEAK was invited to attend the conference, which was very exciting and put us in touch with women from many countries. The conference was about women and reproductive rights. Women's reproductive rights means a woman's right to decide whether, when and how to have children, no matter what nationality, class, race, age, religion, disability, sexuality she is or whether she is married or not. Papers and workshops looked at women's health and reproductive rights from many different sides. These included abortion, contraceptives, lesbianism, violence against women, and many more. We will bring SPEAK readers more information about these issues in the future. ☺



# SPEAK



SPEAK puts women's liberation on the agenda of the South African liberation struggle. Through interviews, photographs, poetry, and stories, women speak out about their oppression as women, and how they are fighting to change it. Get your copy of SPEAK now! Send the information below with your subscription payment to:  
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# Preventing pregnancy- condoms and diaphragms

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*In the last few SPEAK's we talked about the pill and the injection as ways of preventing pregnancy. In this issue we look at 'barrier' methods . Barrier methods prevent pregnancy and also help to prevent the spread of sexually transmitted diseases*

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Diaphragms and condoms are barrier methods of preventing pregnancy. They prevent the man's sperm from reaching the woman's egg. In this way, pregnancy is prevented. Barrier methods of contraception do not have any harmful side-effects. They put the control of prevention back in the hands of people.

## **What is a diaphragm?**

The diaphragm is a contraceptive used by women. It is used with a spermicidal jelly. The diaphragm is made of soft, thin rubber. It is shaped like a cup, with a ring around the rim. The ring can be pushed together to change its shape so it can slide into the vagina and be pushed to the neck of the womb. It acts as a barrier to prevent sperm from swimming into the womb. The spermicidal jelly helps to kill sperm. It has no harmful side-effects.

## **Using a diaphragm**

A woman who uses a diaphragm must put it in before she has sex. Before putting it in she

smears spermicidal jelly on both sides of the diaphragm. She then uses her fingers to squeeze the diaphragm into a narrow shape that will slide into the vagina. She pushes it to the top of her vagina and lets go of it there. The rim of the diaphragm opens up, and covers the cervix, which is the neck of the womb.

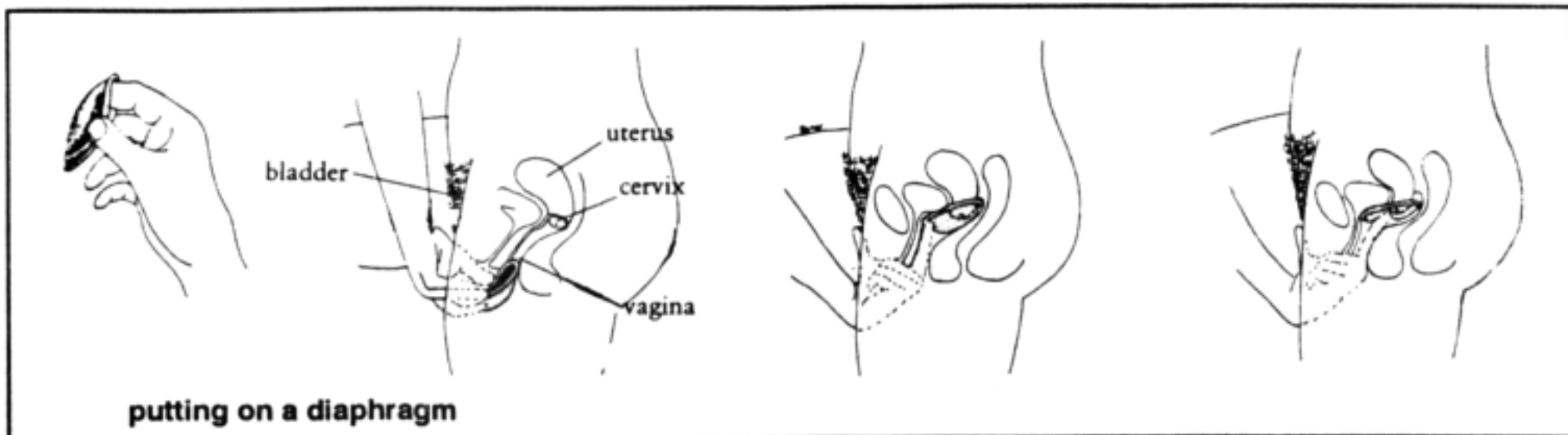
## **How does the diaphragm work?**

When a woman and man have sex the diaphragm prevents the sperm that swims up the vagina from passing up into the womb. The spermicidal jelly kills off the sperm. A woman can put the diaphragm in up to six hours before she has sex.

## **Taking the diaphragm out**

The diaphragm must be left in for six hours after having sex. This is to make sure that sperm do not get into the womb. It is best to sit over the toilet, or to squat over a cloth when taking the diaphragm out. This is because quite a lot of fluid will come out with the diaphragm. The woman then hooks her finger around the rim of the diaphragm and it slips out.





### Taking care of the diaphragm

A diaphragm can last for up to four years if it is carefully looked after. When it has been taken out after sex, wash it with soap and running water. Dry it off, shake a little powder, like baby powder, on it and put it back into its box until it is needed again. The powder and the box both help to protect the diaphragm and make it last longer. When you next use your diaphragm, first rinse the powder off with running water. It is a good idea to check that there are no holes in the diaphragm. When it looks as if it is getting thin in places, get a new one. If you are unsure, take the diaphragm to a chemist or health worker and ask.

### How do you get a diaphragm?

Diaphragms are not easy to get. The government health clinics do not provide diaphragms. You can only get them from private doctors and some non-governmental clinics, like the Planned Parenthood Association which has a clinic in Johannesburg. The diaphragm has to be measured to fit the woman's cervix because not all women have the same size cervix. This is done by a trained health worker. The size of a woman's cervix also changes if she has a baby.

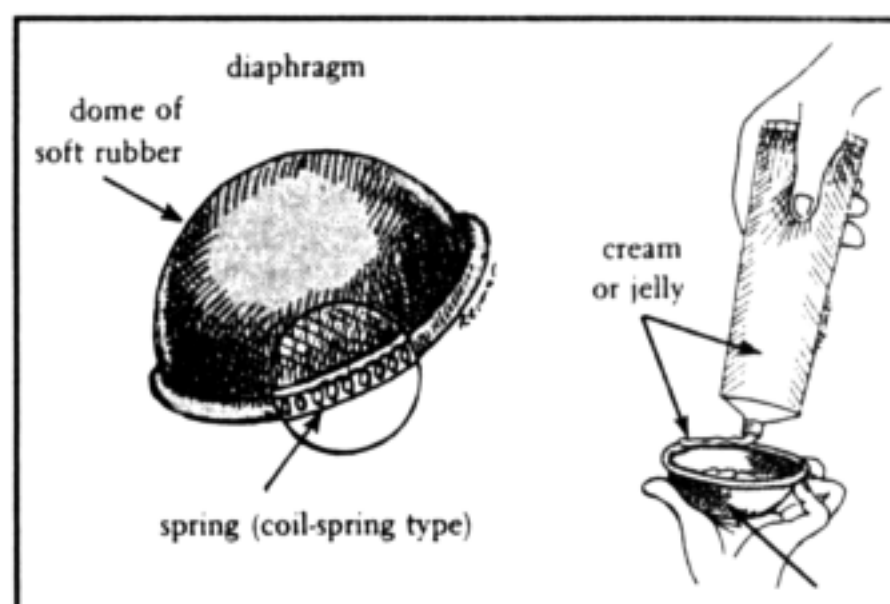
After the size of the diaphragm has been decided, the woman will be taught how to use it properly. She will be shown how to put it in and take it out. She will be shown how to check that the neck of the womb is properly covered. She will learn to know how the diaphragm feels when it is properly fitted.

### How safe is a diaphragm?

If a diaphragm is properly used it is 95% safe in preventing pregnancy. In other words, about five out of every hundred women who use a diaphragm over a year get pregnant because the diaphragm fails.

### How much does a diaphragm cost?

If you get a diaphragm from a doctor it will cost about R160.00, including the cost of the visit to the doctor. The contraceptive jelly will cost about R25.00. The Planned Parenthood Association (PPA) runs a clinic in Johannesburg. They charge R65.00 for a diaphragm and R14.00 for spermicidal jelly. Remember that this diaphragm, if carefully looked after can last for up to four years. Government family planning clinics give spermicidal jellies free of charge. A tube of spermicidal jelly will be enough for about ten or twelve times of having sex.



Graphics : from Our Bodies Ourselves



**Important Dates For Women's  
Action**



**March 8**

International Women's Day

**May 28**

International Day for Women's Health

**August 9**

National Women's Day

**September 14**

Women's Image in Media Day

**September 28**

International Abortion Rights Day

**November 25**

Day of No Violence Against Women

**Women Together Are Strong**