

5 YEARS OF grassroots

NON-PROFIT COMMUNITY NEWSPAPER

THE PAPER ABOUT YOU

5 YEARS ago the Western Cape's first community newspaper Grassroots was started. With only one full-time organiser and sharing offices with the Domestic Worker's Association, Grassroots was a small project. Only 5 000 copies of the first issue (March 1980)

were printed.

Today Grassroots is 5 years old. There are 5 full-time workers. And the circulation is between 15 and 25 000 copies.

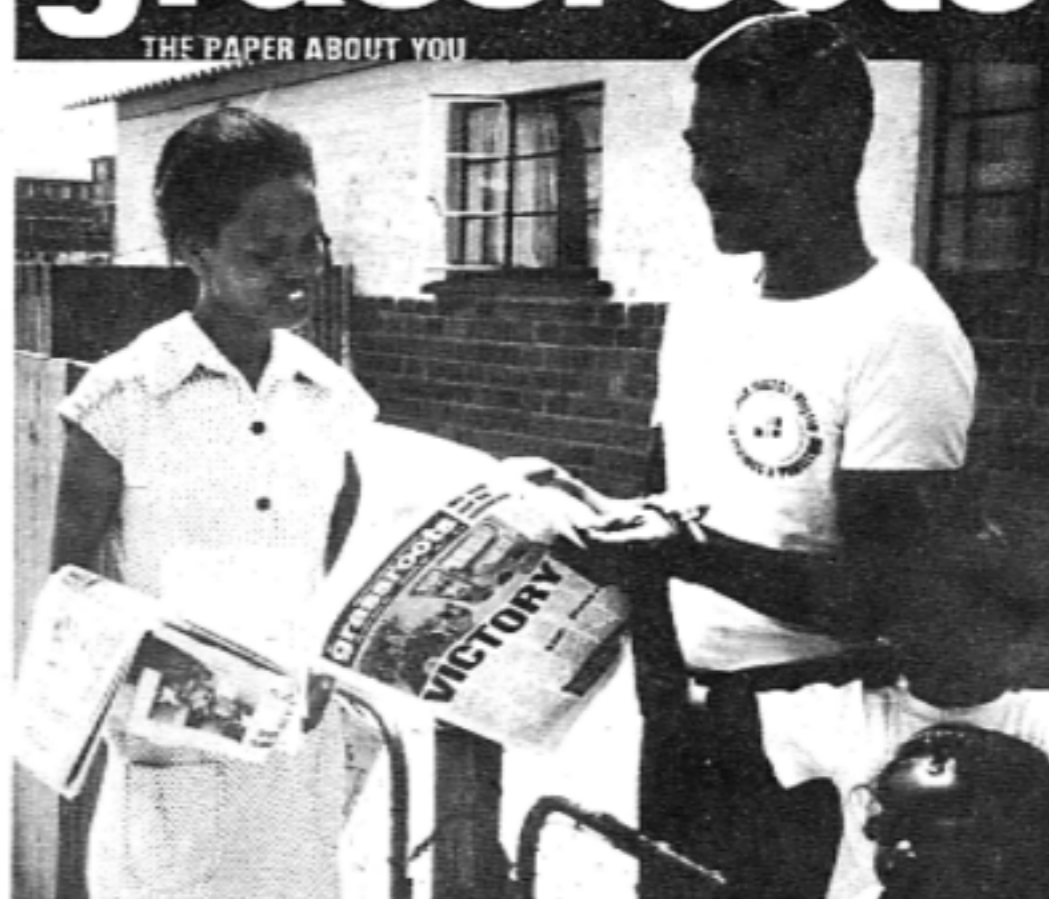
In 1980 there was only Grassroots. Now there is also Ukusa (Durban), Speak (Johannesburg),

The Eye (Pretoria), Saamstaan (South Cape), Grahamstown Voice and Bricks(Windhoek). Saspu, a national student newspaper, is based in Johannesburg.

Grassroots is made up of over 60 democratic organisations. The civics under WCCA and CAHAC, women's

organisations, students organisations, youth under CAYCO, many trade unions and the UDF are all linked to Grassroots. The members of these organisations keep Grassroots alive by giving news and selling Grassroots.

Unlike other newspapers Grassroots does not make a profit. It is always struggling for money. Many people help Grassroots by subscribing and giving monthly donations. Cape Town small traders also assist Grassroots by advertising in the newspaper.



Passing media skills on to other organisations

Meeting needs of the Community

GRASSROOTS is not only a community paper. It also has an Education and Training Project.

Grassroots gets lots of requests for assistance in producing newsletters, pamphlets, posters, banners and so on. In the past we could not always help organisations. Often we were bringing out the paper and too busy.

So in 1983 it was decided to start an Education and Training project. One person was employed full time. The ET person's job is very exciting but also demanding. She has to

train members of organisations and school students in media. She also assists them in bringing out publications and school magazines.

Twice a year she also trains people who want to assist Grassroots. These people then help to get news or assist with designing the paper.

Last year for the first time Grassroots held a big media school. This course ran for eight days. People from Cape Town, Oudtshoorn, Port Elizabeth, East London, Grahamstown, North Cape and OFS attended the

school. They were taught all the different aspects of producing media.

The ET person also produces media resources. So far three booklets on media have been printed. By the end of the year 2 more will have been completed. These booklets help people to understand media and to take out pamphlets and newsletters.

A tape-slide show on Grassroots was completed last year. This year Grassroots will be producing a 40 minute video on media.

Government raids and bannings

THE last five years have not been easy for Grassroots. The newspaper has come under many attacks from the government.

Eight months after Grassroots began, its first organiser Johnny Issel was banned. He is still banned.

Every year many issues of Grassroots are banned. This government does not like to hear the truth. It is afraid because the people will see how evil they are. So, wherever Grassroots exposes injustice, oppression, exploitation, they ban Grassroots.

Two months ago the Security police raided Grassroots offices. They searched for hours. They took away many documents, publications and pamphlets.

But Grassroots is determined that this harassment and intimidation will not stop it from reporting the truth. The government, Hendrickse, Rajbansi and community councillors say they speak

for us. But today our people are saying: "Through our newsletters like UDF News, pamphlets and Grassroots, We Speak for Ourselves!"



Speaking for Ourselves!

IN our country the government controls the TV and radio. Through this they try to imprison our minds. To sell us 'leaders' like Hendrickse, Rajbansi and Buthelezi. They try to close our eyes and ears to oppression and injustice.

The Afrikaans newspapers support the government in this. They will always side with Botha against the people. These papers are owned by the big bosses.

They depend on the government to help make their fat profits from our workers.

The English newspapers sometimes attack the government. They criticise apartheid. But they too are owned by the big bosses. These bosses fear a real People's Government in South Africa. So while they criticise apartheid, they still won't help us in our struggle for freedom.

For this reason Grassroots and other community papers were started in different parts of our country. These community papers are controlled by the

people's organisations. They promote our organisations and our fight for justice. They open our eyes to exploitation, injustice and the suffering of our people. Through them we speak for ourselves.



Building organisations through selling 'Roots'

Popularising organisations



Mobilising the oppressed

Educating the people

Building the Peoples Press

A newspaper is a powerful weapon of the people. It can play an important role in building our struggle for freedom.

For this reason Grassroots is committed to helping communities start their own papers.

Many of our people live in the rural areas. They live in small towns and are on the farms. Here they face many hardships. They are heavily oppressed and exploited by the white baas.

For a long time our people in the rural areas got no help from the organisations in the



community papers started last year: SAAMSTAAN (Oudtshoorn), BRICKS (Namibia)



big cities. To help overcome this situation, Grassroots began a Rural Project.

Through this project, Grassroots helped to start Saamstaan, a com-

munity paper for the South Cape. Saamstaan brought together the oppressed communities Oudtshoorn, Mossel Bay, George, Ladismith, Calitzdorp, Swel-

lendam, Willowmore and many other towns. Today Saamstaan is the voice of these communities, uniting them against oppression and injustice.