

One of my children still lives with me, together with her husband and their children. My grandchildren.

I haven't told them what the Government has done to me because I frankly don't know how.

What do you say to three little children to make them understand their Granny is not the person they thought she was, that she is really another kind of person altogether?

How do you tell them their Granny is committing a crime by even living in the same house with them?

HUMILIATION

You will never know what it is like to stand hours on end at a counter trying to explain to a young Government clerk why he should change your "Coloured" card to White. So many times did I visit that office, and each time my humiliation was greater than the last ...

I'm not bitter against them. They're doing no more than they are paid to do. But I am bitter against the politicians who instructed them, and the likes of you who allowed them to do it.

Do you know what it's like to be told where you must live, that you no longer have any right to stay in the same house with your own family? A house, you and your husband saved for and bought over 20 years ago?

Have you ever thought of being forced to leave the friends of a lifetime, to go and live among strangers with whom you have nothing in common? Again, I ask, have you seen the Coloured townships on the sand dunes of the Cape Flats?

Have you ever lived in fear that the next knock on your door will be a Government official telling you to get out of the neighbourhood because you're an affected person, as though suddenly you have some dreadful disease that might contaminate those near you?

Have you ever been told that the only solution to your problem was to go and live in a foreign land?

The person who told me that was a senior official who realised that his own fellow White South Africans had long since lost their souls.

I am nearing the end of my life and my last appeal to the Government was that they issue me with a White card so that at least I could be buried in the same part of the cemetery as my husband. They refused!

Do you think it would have upset some masterplan if they'd shown me a little compassion?

Am I in fact a Coloured? I really and honestly don't know. I am what God made me. All my life I lived and worked among the same people as I do now, and when I was small I never thought to ask my mother and father if they were White or Coloured?

Did you ask *your* parents such a question? Do you think God will ask me?

Letter from the Black Sash

Mrs. Jean Sinclair,
President, Black Sash.

The Black Sash has circulated its "Charter for Women" to various organisations, particularly women's organisations, with a request that it be studied and formally adopted. Our hope is that these organisations will strive for its implementation in whichever way is best suited to their particular activities and constitutions.

The Charter was very carefully drawn up in consultation with a Professor of Constitutional Law, and we feel that there can be no woman who will not support its nine clauses, which are fundamental to the normal life of any women and which are, for the most part, denied to African women.

For many years the Black Sash has run Advice Offices to help the African people to cope with the maze of laws and regulations which restrict their lives and twist them out of normally accepted patterns. The misery and suffering we see every day decided us to inaugurate a campaign to try to ameliorate the plight of African women.

On the basis of the mass of information gleaned in the course of our work we published a series of articles on all aspects of the lives of African women, which were subsequently incorporated in a booklet entitled "Who Cares?". These have already been on sale to the public and will be again, together with a re-edition of our "Memorandum on the Pass Laws" which is a comprehensive explanation and assessment of the exceedingly complicated system which governs and controls the lives of all African people.

The public cannot be expected to understand how some of the absolutely basic clauses of the Charter come to be included at all and are not simply taken for granted unless they are made aware of the actual conditions under which so many South African citizens labour. The Booklet and the Memorandum are our effort to supply the general public with some of the facts which we have learnt through first-hand experience.

The Charter for Women was originally incorporated in a Petition which was presented to Parliament on behalf of the Black Sash by Mrs. Helen Suzman, M.P. on the 18th February, 1971. The Petition contains a fairly detailed account of the many difficulties which beset African women in their daily lives, and was presented to Parliament in an effort to bring home to those directly responsible the repercussions of the welter of restrictive laws they make and pass.

The Charter is enclosed. The Booklet "Who Cares" is on sale at The Black Sash, 37 Harvard Buildings, Joubert Street, Johannesburg, at 20c per copy.

The Charter for Women appears on page 7.