



SPEAK



JANUARY-MARCH 87



Launch of the South African
Domestic Workers' Union

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Our Health

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The cover photo was taken at the launch of South African Domestic Workers' Union, in Cape Town, November 1986. Photo by Dave Hartman, Afrapix.

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LETTERS

Dear SPEAK

I have gone through Learn and Teach magazine and I was happy to read an article about SPEAK magazine for women.

It's quite long that I waited to know about such a magazine and I think its quite an encouraging magazine to the oppressed women folk of our beloved country. I suggest that it should also have information about how to organise women and also to do self-help projects to help to remove poverty in the family. I think they should be made to realize that they have natural abilities and talents of their own rather than to seek work from the bosses and be exploited.

I would be happy to receive your SPEAK magazine. I am a woman who has realized her position in the society.

Yours sincerely
Erodia Nkadimeng

Dear Erodia, thank you for your encouraging letter to SPEAK. Thank you also for your suggestions. We welcome ideas of what people want to read about, and we will certainly try to have such articles. We hope also that in this way SPEAK readers will respond by writing to SPEAK about their own experiences. We look forward to this, as this is how SPEAK will grow - SPEAK Collective

NO TO RAPE SAY PORT ALFRED WOMEN



Drawing by Sarah Hillis

The town of Port Alfred is in the Eastern Cape. The township of Port Alfred is well organised with a civic organisation, parents-teachers-students association, and a pensioners organisation. All organisations are very active. People in the township stand together and make important decisions through the street and area committees.

The Port Alfred Women's organisation (PAWO) was formed in March 1986 when women in the township joined. On the first Sunday of every month, PAWO women meet to talk about things in the township. On Sunday 3 of May 1986 they had something very important to talk about - an all women stayaway. Here is an interview with a woman from PAWO, Koleka Nkwinti. Kally Forrest spoke with Koleka about the stayaway PAWO organised in May, 1986. SPEAK thanks all of these women for the opportunity to share their story with SPEAK readers.

WHY DID PAWO DECIDE TO ORGANISE A STAYAWAY?

"Early in the morning of Saturday the 3 of May a 59 year old woman was raped in the township stadium. The rapist also stabbed and assaulted this old woman, Mrs Maliwe Glass. He had raped other women in the past.

Mrs Glass pointed out the rapist to the police. The police arrested him, and a very sick Mrs Glass was taken to hospital in Grahamstown. The same afternoon the police released the rapist. They did not charge him for the assault or the rape. He was totally free.

The women of the township were very, very angry. This rapist is never charged by the police. The police protected and looked after him. We are afraid of this man. Women are afraid to walk alone in the streets because of him.

All women in PAWO decided to organise a stayaway to protest against the release of this rapist. We also wanted a stayaway to protest against the detentions of 5 women students from the local school."

WHAT WERE PAWOS DEMANDS?

"PAWO demanded that the police charge the rapist with rape and assault. We also demanded the release of the 5 school students. If the police met our demands then we would go back to work.

We also demanded that the white women in town come to speak to women in the township. We wanted to show and tell them about our problems in the townships. We know that all women, black and white, fear rape. We felt white women may understand and be sympathetic to us. We also wanted white women with husbands in the police to explain our problems to their husbands. We wanted the women to explain how bad it was to release a violent rapist back into the township."

HOW DID THE WHITE COMMUNITY DEAL WITH YOUR DEMANDS?

"The white women were not sympathetic. We were surprised, we thought they will feel for us. The white women just got angry. We think they were angry because they now had to do their own housework.

On Wednesday the Port Alfred Employers Federation came to speak to our civic organisation in the township. The Employers Federation speak to the civic when there is a boycott. The Federation did not come to PAWO to speak with us. So we told our men in the civic: 'Please do not negotiate for us. This is a women's problem. Men do not get raped.' So the men in the township did not speak for us. They told the Employer's Federation to come and speak to PAWO.

The Employer's Federation would not speak to PAWO. But this did not worry us. We wanted to speak to the white women in the town.

On Monday (a week after the stayaway began), a group of white English-speaking women came to PAWO to talk. We showed these white women around the township. We wanted these women to know how we live. PAWO and these white women decided to meet and talk again in the future.

On Monday night we called off the stayaway. PAWO members were happy to go on talking to these white women. The rapist was charged with assault, but not with rape. But township people were so angry that it was not possible for the rapist to stay



in the community any more. He no longer lives in Port Alfred."

WHAT HAPPENED AFTER THE STAYAWAY?

Early next morning (Tuesday 6 May) police detained me (Koleka Nkwinti) and 3 other PAWO members. Police also detained my husband, brother-in-law and 7 other men from the community.

The police questioned me about the stayaway. They wanted to know who was behind the stayaway. They did not believe that I alone organised everything. They thought men in the

township organised the stayaway. They think men are behind everything women do.

I feel that women of Port Alfred became very strong. I was held in prison far away from Port Alfred. But women hired a car to visit me and bring me food. Also PAWO plans to do many things in the township. The women are really united and strong."

DO TOWNSHIP MEN AND WOMEN TALK ABOUT RAPE ?

"It is very important to talk openly about the problem of rape. Most people don't talk about rape. They are ashamed and shy. Often the family of the raped girl or women don't want to talk about it.

But in Port Alfred it is different. We started organising in our community around education, child-care, pensions, and so on. We started talking about all the problems and things that we need to change. So we also talk about rape, and any sexual assault on a woman. Port Alfred people see any sexual assault as another kind of oppression. Men and women think the same about this - we are united in the struggle.

A raped woman is trusted. If she says she was raped, we support her. It does not matter who the woman is. Even if she is a drunkard and she gets raped, the rape is still a crime against her. In fact it is worse because she was in a weak position. Our women and men do not blame a woman for a rape. We do not say that the rape was woman's fault. So women can talk about sexual harassment openly and they will get community support."



'Working Women Organise' - banner at the Metal and Allied Workers' Union AGM.

FREE THE CHILDREN

About 30 women, mainly members of Black Sash, Women for Peaceful Change Now and Action Against Apartheid, marched to Westville Prison. They brought balloons and sweets for 39 children from Durban still in detention.

Each balloon was marked with the name of a young detainee, with the words "Free this child". The prison authorities accepted the sweets but not the balloons. The women let go of the balloons which floated off high above the prison.

According to General J.P. Coetzee, there are 256 children of 15 years old or under in detention. But the Black Sash says the number of children under the age of 18 in detention is between 1 300 and 1 800.

YESTERDAY TODAY & TOMORROW

FRELIMO FIGHTS FOR LEGAL RIGHTS OF WOMEN WORKERS

The Mozambique government is fighting for employers to respect the legal rights of working mothers and pregnant women, as well as for the dignity of women workers. The government has made it a law that employers respect women workers.

- The law says:
- * There should be 60 days maternity leave.
 - * If the firms have creches, mothers have a right to two half an hour breaks to feed their children every day for a year.
 - * Pregnant women should not do night shifts or overtime.
 - * If the work is dangerous to health, they have to be moved to other jobs without any reduction in salary.
 - * Mothers may not be dismissed without a just cause for a year after giving birth.

Mr Abdul Julaya who is an inspector said that anyone who infringes the dignity of women workers will be dismissed. The employers often violate these laws.



End of year fun! A dance performed by women from Phoenix United Women's Association at their annual concert. The women's groups are involved in handwork groups and in organising pre-schools in Phoenix.

The Seventh Day

by Mutinati Barnabé João

On the seventh day
A comrade died who will not be buried,
Who died and yet will perfume the air,
Who's dead, but will give forever the flower of courage,
Who was from our family, yet nobody's going to cry,
Who her comrades knew was important, but not her,
And she will stay unburied because she is a huge body
And there is not enough earth to dig her grave.

And so it is
When someone grows to be the size of the People
She stays unburied because she is immense.
The Hero has no grave.

This poem was written for Samora Machel's first wife at the time of her death. It reminds us of Samora Machel, and of others, who have died and who are remembered for what they stood for and the good they did.

OUT ON THE STREET

Just recently, a 75 year old women Ms Fakazile Dinde from Umlazi, was turned out of her home by her son. Many years ago she had been prevented from buying her own house because of the Natal Code which said that all African women were minors. This meant that women could not sign contracts or own property. Only men could do this. So Ms Dinde was forced to buy a house in the name of her eldest son. This son recently sold the house without asking her or even telling her about it. She is now out on the streets, without a home.

The part of the Natal Code that treated women as minors has now been changed, but there are still thousands of women who do not have their houses registered in their own names because of the law that applied then.

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SPEAK
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are Strong'
T-shirt! R7,00



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our office.
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A new union has been born! Domestic worker organisations have joined together to form one big union. It is called the South African Domestic Workers' union. This union represents 50 000 domestic workers around the country. SADWU was launched with high spirits and determined resolutions. They are demanding laws to protect domestic workers, living wages of R200 a month, pensions, Workmen's Compensation, Unemployment Insurance, sick leave and pay, maternity benefits and holiday pay. SADWU has decided to join COSATU.

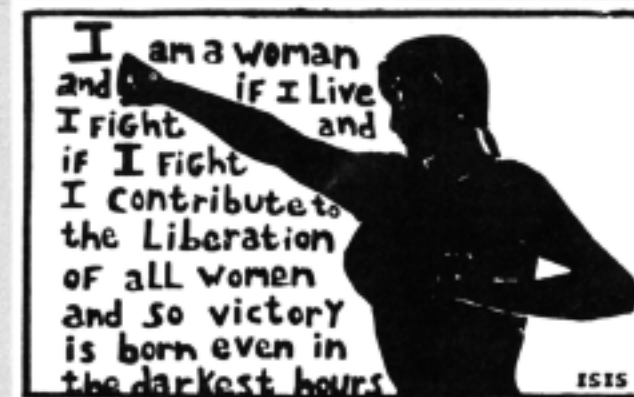


"CALL A MEETING
ON WOMEN
AFTER WORK
& WHAT HAPPENS?
ONLY TWO
TURN UP.
WHERE WERE
THEY ALL,
I'D LIKE TO KNOW!"

CHILD CARE COST PAID BY UNION

A local civic union in Winnipeg, Canada has come up with a new idea. Members saw that for many women workers child care problems are one reason for not becoming involved in the union. So they decided that any members attending their central meeting or elected to attend other meetings would be paid back for money that members had to spend on child care whilst attending the meeting.

Guess its still seen as women's job to arrange child care. But at least it's a start in making it possible for women to be a real part of union meetings.



I am a woman
and if I live
I fight and
if I fight
I contribute to
the Liberation
of all women
and so victory
is born even in
the darkest hours

1985



Photograph by Michelle Friedman

The Commercial, Catering and Allied Workers' Union of South Africa (CCAWUSA) in Durban held a women's rights workshop to talk about the many problems that face working women. The day was good - lots of discussion, poetry, singing, and a strong feeling about having more meetings to talk about women's rights!



People living in shacks build barriers of burning tyres. They wear masks as a disguise.



Relatives of those who have been detained, put in prison and killed by the army, demand justice.



Women are often the ones who run homes and whole communities. A 'common pot' gives one meal a day to those who have no incomes.



Women making patchworks. The map on the wall reminds them of the 90 000 believed to be 'disappeared' people of South America.

SOMOS MAS

We are more

'Somos Mas', which means 'We are More' in Spanish, is what women in South America are saying through their sewing. Many South American countries have very harsh governments. People live daily with army and troops in their villages and towns. There are many detentions. There are rapes committed by troops. Loved ones just disappear at the hands of these governments.

Whereas the newspapers often do not report on these things, women do - through sewing! In Chile sewing bordados which are patchwork news squares started in 1974, the year their socialist government was overthrown. Things got very bad. Women began to meet together in the slums of Santiago, Chile. They began to embroider patchwork squares that told of the repression that was happening in their lives.

These patchworks are sold all over the world in markets and shops. In Peru, women work together to sew patchworks as well. A woman from Peru said, "What we are trying to do with these messages is to make evil disappear."



Women on the march with banners saying: 'I am a socialist, I am a feminist, I am an optimist.'



The moon has risen, but the women still have work to do.

TODAY by Nise Malange

Everyone who has died
Is here today
Those who died in the struggle of the people
Are here
Singing with us -
They are holding our hands,
Just that touch
Moving through all our bodies
Like a bloodstream.

Biko
Is here today
Neil Agget
Who died for the liberation of workers
Is here today
Ephraim Shabalala
Who died
The system's victim
Is here today
Andries Raditsela
Who died
For us all
Is here today,
with us
sharing.
This day with us.

Those who died as oppressors are here -
They weep about their past
Their hands are swollen
They cannot hold our hands
I can feel their cold breath
Brushing my shoulders.

Our babies and children who died
Because of the system
Are here playing around
On this day
They are observing and learning
From us for their next lives.

Our brothers and sisters,
Mothers and fathers
Who died confused,
Without making up their minds
Are here today
They want to put their arms around us and sing:
"Hlanganani Basebenzi"

The oppressors, the killers,
The murderers, assassins,
The traitors, the impimpis
All those who were against our people's freedom
- Are wandering among us
They are looking closely
Into our eyes
They want to speak
To us about what they have done
But there is no way for us
To be aware of their presence.
Away oppressor
Away traitor
Go away
Go away,
All those who were against peace and justice,
Must go away from us today.
Today!

This poem is from a book of poems by Alfred Qabula, Mi S'dumo Hlatswayo and Nise Malange. These poets are involved in cultural work with COSATU. This book is called "Black Mamba Rising - South African Worker Poets in Struggle" and is available from Worker Resistance and Culture Publications, Department of Sociology, University of Natal, King George V Avenue, Durban.

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Only a Woman

a short story



"I am sick and tired of this waiting," she shouted. Her voice echoed back at her. The pots rattled as she took out her frustration of the day in her washing. Outside the children played. They had been waiting a long time. "Mummy, mummy, can we go now?" "In a while my loves," she had told them, "Your father will be here just now and then we can go."

She looked at the clock on the kitchen table. Four thirty. If only he would hurry back. It was partly her fault. She had forgotten to tell him. She had met her aunty on the bus yesterday. "Come and visit tomorrow," her aunty had said, "Your cousin Shantha is visiting with her children." The children had danced about with joy when she told them.

"How big is the baby?"

"Can she talk?"

"Will Suren be there?"

"Yes, yes, lets go to visit them mummy."

If only she had remembered to tell him. They could have gone at least two hours ago. She had spent this day cleaning up, washing clothes, ironing, catching up on the housework from the working week of rushing mornings and evenings.



The children had been good. They had stayed out of the way. She had kept them going with promises of: "We are going out in the afternoon - remember - so be good." She had bathed them, and dressed them and now she too was ready to go. But where was he! She dried her hands on her apron. She sat down watching the children outside. Should she just go out with the children and explain to him later? But then she would have to face his anger. Maybe even his hands if he'd had a few

drinks. No! It wasn't worth it. She didn't have the energy to fight him. She had learnt early in their marriage what the rules were. It had only been a trip to the shop. But he had arrived home to find her out. He had shouted and almost hit her in his anger. He accused her of going with other men. His anger had trapped her. From that day on she knew the rules. He was the boss. She was only a woman. She couldn't fight him. She needed him. Her children needed him. She heard the door. The children were shouting, "Daddy, daddy," jumping all over him. He had kisses and sweets for them.

Her anger, her frustration melted a little. She looked at them. Her family. No point in her being angry. She would just spoil their moment of happiness.

"Come, children," she said, "Have you told your father where we want to visit today."





Creating Toys

by Norma McCormack

Making things is a very important part of learning. Creating something for oneself from the things around is something children have always done. Building their own toys from old wire, empty cans, tire tubes and other cast-off things keeps children happy for many hours. At the same time they learn to concentrate. They also plan and think about what they want to make. All this makes children feel good about themselves.

Think back of how you used to enjoy making things in your early years. Perhaps you lived on a farm and made clay animals or weaved mats from bits of dry sticks or decorated pots with lovely colours. A lot of what you may remember will be the fun and pride you felt when you made things for yourself. To buy toys today is very expensive. Even if we can afford them it is good to encourage children to be creative and make their own from old things around the house.

COLLECT THESE KINDS OF THINGS

Toilet rolls, egg boxes, old empty containers, bits of coloured paper, pictures from magazines, scraps of material and wool, matchboxes, silver paper from cigarette boxes. All these bits and pieces will start your child thinking about making all sorts of wonderful things!

All you have to do is produce a clear space with glue, scissors, some crayons and some of the things you've collected. The rest is over to them to enjoy themselves!



MAKING A CATERPILLAR

- * Take any egg box and pull off the top part.
- * Cut in half the bottom bumpy part into which the eggs fit.
- * Use this to make a small caterpillar. Or the 2 pieces can be joined together with a piece of string or sticky tape to make one long caterpillar.
- * Use paint or crayons to colour the caterpillar and draw its eyes.
- * Stick 2 matchsticks into its head to make feelers.
- * Tie a piece of string to its head so that it can be pulled along the floor.

FOR EACH OF US IT'S DIFFERENT

SPEAK went out and spoke to women about their periods. Some women told of the pain they have and how they cope with it, others spoke of irregular periods and heavy bleeding. Some women spoke of the tension and irritation they feel just before they get their periods. Many women spoke of not having any problems at all.

There are many reasons why the kind of period a woman has can be so different for each woman. Our lives are different and the things that happen in our lives affect our periods. Feelings - like being worried, depressed, or excited can cause our periods to be late, or to even stop for a while. What we eat, the amount of work we do, and how much sleep we get can cause a change in our periods. Other things, like age, the type of contraception we use, or having a sickness or disease can also make a change in our periods.

In this SPEAK we will talk about some of these things. We will also share the ways in which women said they cope with their period pains.

AGE

"I am now 45 years old and yet my periods have become very irregular - this never used to happen. Sometimes I find it much heavier than before."



Some young women have irregular periods and pain until their bodies have adjusted to having periods. Women between the ages of 40 and 50 may also have very irregular periods and heavy bleeding. This happens because they are approaching their 'change of life'. It may be useful to see a doctor if bleeding becomes very heavy and there is a lot of discomfort.

CONTRACEPTIVES

Some contraceptives interfere with our periods. Many women spoke of the worry they felt about this.

The Pill

"As soon as I started using the pill I noticed that my period became much shorter, with less blood, and no period pains."

The pill does cause this to happen. But some women do still experience bad period cramps while using the pill.

The Loop (IUCD)

The loop can also cause changes to periods. The flow of blood can be heavier, periods may be irregular and period pains are worse, often with backache. People who suffer from bad period

pains should not use the loop because it makes the pain worse. The pain is made worse by the loop because the uterus squeezes against it when it forces the menstrual blood out.



The Injection (Depo Provera)

The injection can cause irregular bleeding or periods to stop completely. Sometimes it is also difficult to become pregnant after using the injection. Many women worry about having no periods while using the injection. One woman said to us: "I am worried about this blood that does not come out each month. Where does it go?"

In fact, what happens is that the injection stops the egg from being formed. Also, the lining of the uterus does not develop so that there is no blood to come out.

PREGNANCY

If your periods stop, and if you have had sex with a man during your fertile time without either of you using a contraceptive, then there is a good chance that you are pregnant. To check this you can have a pregnancy test. Some chemists sell do-it-yourself pregnancy tests. It is possible for a young girl to become pregnant without ever having had a period. It can happen, although not common, that you still get periods after becoming pregnant. A woman told us her story about this!

"I didn't know I was pregnant because my periods carried on for

3 months just like usual. Only later did I discover that I was pregnant!"

MISCARRIAGE

If you have heavy bleeding after missing a period, it may be caused by a miscarriage. It is quite common for women to have miscarriages very early in pregnancy - before they even know they are pregnant. If your bleeding is very heavy and you have big clots of blood - the size of a 1 cent piece or bigger - you should see a doctor.

DISEASE

You may suddenly stop having periods, and you are not pregnant, or if you start bleeding very heavily with every period and have a lot of pain, or maybe your periods become very irregular. Some diseases can cause these types of changes. It is important to see a doctor so that she can find out what is causing the change in your periods and treat if necessary.

COPING WITH PERIOD PAINS

Period pains are believed to be caused by the uterus muscles squeezing the blood from the walls of the uterus. But it is not understood why this should be painful to some women and not to others. Most of the women SPEAK spoke to did not get bad period pains. Those who do get period pains told us how they suffer and how they've learnt to cope.

"I get terrible pain when I have my period. The pain usually wakes me up early in the morning and I know my period has come.

I hate to take tablets because I fear side effects. I put a hot water bottle on my stomach. It helps with the pain and I at least get back to sleep again. But I usually feel very tired and drained the next day."

"I have found that exercise helps me when I have bad pain. I don't usually feel like exercising, but when I do it helps to relax the muscles in my stomach and the pain is relieved. Rubbing my stomach also helps. Asking someone to rub the lower part of my back helps a lot as well."

"I used to get very depressed before my periods and used to feel like crying at anything. My breasts also got very full and sore and my body felt bloated. A friend told me to take

calcium tablets. I now take calcium tablets a few days before my period starts and during my period. It has really helped me."

"I get terrible pain but my mother always told me nothing helps.

So I just roll about on my stomach! That helps!"

There are a number of home remedies which many women use to lessen the discomfort of periods. Some women find that changing their diet helps a bit - like drinking less tea and

coffee and eating less salt and flour and other refined foods. Others take vitamin C and calcium tablets which seem to lessen menstrual tension. Massage can help. Although when we are in pain we do not feel like doing anything, exercise and keeping active can help.

We should avoid taking a lot of drugs to help us cope with the pain and tension as drugs can cause a lot of problems and harm to our bodies. Many of the pain killers which say they help period pains do not really help. If your pain is really bad and you want to take pain killers you should talk to a doctor about the best pain killers for period pain.

When something unusual happens to your period pattern you should try and get a doctor's advice. Some doctors prescribe just anything - like the contraceptive pill - to correct problems with periods without finding the cause of the problems properly. Knowing about our bodies helps us to make decisions about ourselves and to demand proper treatment from doctors and hospitals.

There are books that have good information about women's health. These are often written by women, with women's interests at heart. If you would like to find out more about such books, you can write to SPEAK Collective, Office 14, The Ecumenical Centre, 20 St Andrew's Street, Durban.



WOMEN'S WORK



Women make up
half the world

They work nearly
two-thirds of the
world's work hours

Yet they earn one-
tenth of the world's
income

IS NEVER DONE