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## SPEAK's Offices

We have offices in Durban and in Johannesburg. If you want to get SPEAK Magazine, please write to the Johannesburg office.

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SPEAK Collective members are Gill, Glynis, Helen, Karen, Nise, Phumelele, Shamim, and Vanessa. The government's State of Emergency stops us from being free to write about many important things. If there was no State of Emergency, we would be able to write about these things.

## Thanks

We thank those people who helped with this issue of SPEAK. They are Charlotte, Debby and Laura.

## Sorry

We made a mistake in SPEAK number 24. We wrote that 122 miners had been killed in the Kinross mining disaster, instead of 177. We apologise for this mistake. We support the demand that health and safety, and workers' lives, come before profits.

The cover photograph was taken in Durban by Pax Magwaza, Afrapix.

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# LETTERS TO SPEAK

Dear SPEAK Collective

Do numbers matter? A lot, some, at least. A lot could be 122, or 177. Some could be 420 or 20 833. Perhaps numbers matter even less for children. A children's story. Maybe the feeling cannot be expressed through numbers at all. But, just for the record, 177 miners died at Kinross in 1986, not 122. The bosses have not yet sorted out just how much money the families of those who died will get. But it certainly is not a lot. R5 000 or so plus a pension depending on salary at time of death. And this is not paid by the mine but by the insurance. The starting wage, today, for an underground worker at the Kinross gold mine is R420 per month. That is some money. But it's also the least. The average wage for directors of Genmin, the mining house that runs Kinross, is R20 833 per month. The mine was fined R100 for the deaths of these 177 workers.

A little, a lot, some, enough.

Did you read the story to children before you printed it? Did the children like the story? It left me with a feeling of hopelessness. It's a really negative story. We can extract a few key words: sadness, out of work, small sum, not happy, miss, not comfortable, unhappy, not safe, accidents, lost, disaster, not return, sacrifice, tears, heavy heart.

I can't imagine any child asking to have it read again. And anyway, what makes it a story for children?

Best wishes  
Martin Nicol  
Mayfair, Johannesburg.

Dear Martin, thank you for your letter. We would like to apologise for the error that we made in SPEAK 24 concerning the number of miners who died at Kinross.

Of course we feel that numbers are important. Whether it is one miner or a thousand killed, it matters very much. That is why we write about these issues. It is because of exploitation and oppression in this country that SPEAK exists as a magazine to raise these issues. We welcome constructive correction and criticism, but we do feel that the tone of your letter is somewhat uncomradely. We are looking at the issue of children's stories in SPEAK. They are very popular, and we have not had any other complaints about "Lerato's Father Goes to the Mines." We welcome comments from other SPEAK readers on this - SPEAK Collective.

Dear SPEAK,  
Kindly publish my poem in your magazine as I would like to share my deep feelings with the readers of your magazine. As you know that many young women are deserted by their lovers after falling pregnant. As a young woman I am directly affected by this problem. That is why I saw a need in sharing my deep feelings with other women. I would like to appeal to all those women who have undergone this bitter experience to see this problem as an international problem, especially faced by women particularly in this country.

I therefore believe that this problem will only be solved if we women address ourselves seriously to it, and also by seeing it as part and parcel of gender oppression.

**WE MUST FIGHT GENDER OPPRESSION NOW.**

Yours faithfully,  
Makhosi Khoza (Miss)  
From Pietermaritzburg, but studying in Cape Town

Dear Makhosi, thank you very much for raising this issue in the pages of SPEAK. It is a very personal issue, but, as you say, it becomes much broader - an international issue. It is yet another issue that women need to organise around - that women and men share equal rights and equal responsibility with parenting of children. We think that your poem is very moving. Thank you for sending it to us and all SPEAK readers. In solidarity - SPEAK Collective.

## Alone In Pains

By Makhosi Khoza

Her eyes were as red  
As the colour of the blood  
Her tears were as salty  
As sea water  
With her glazing eyes like a mirror  
Shined by the sun  
She looked from South  
She looked from North  
But couldn't see the sign  
of the father of a baby

She kept on rubbing her tummy  
Where the unborn was folded like a bean seed  
Feeling protected in mother's womb  
But...  
Her soul was cracked  
As soil erosion  
Her heart was as broken  
as donga beds  
With the flashes in her eyes  
She looked from West  
She looked from East  
But could not track a smell  
Of the father who was running away from his  
responsibility

Meanwhile the unborn was kicking and tickling  
the sad momo  
inside the womb  
Months passed  
Days were knocking A sad momo was chewing  
nothing ; But pains  
She was eating nothing ; but worries  
OOH! There the innocent unborn kicks  
OUT HE CAME  
Sad happy mother welcomes her son  
With warm hands and floods of tears  
to this thorny world  
Where trust and honesty is the myth  
Where love is the game of fools  
OOH! Poor son  
who was sooner or later  
to be told that his father was swallowed up by  
the mountains  
"KUNZIMA BAFAZI EMHLABENI WAMADODA"●

