



SOSCO (Soweto Students Congress) women at Johannesburg march

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Youth Women Organise

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Youth organisations in South Africa are talking seriously about organising women. The South African Youth Congress (SAYCO) has a national organiser for women. Her name is Dipuo. Dipuo's job is to make sure that women are involved in SAYCO and that SAYCO takes up issues affecting women as part of their programme.

Young Women Organise!

Dipuo believes the task of organising women is an important task. She believes this must be given an important place in the work of youth organisation in particular, and the mass

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democratic movement in general. She believes that even with the state of emergency and the attacks from the government on organisations the work of organising women must be done.

Dipuo said in an interview in *YOUTH FOCUS*: "Presently the women's organisation in SAYCO is very weak, because we don't have a solid womens body at national level. But an agreement has been reached that a forum or committee must be created where women can come together and discuss issues that affect them."

For instance, every women is a potential target of rape and other forms of abuse in her community and even beyond. There are also health issues to rally women around such as contraceptives, and issues related to family planning.

Much has been said and published about why are women suffering various kinds of oppression and exploitation. But I would like to point out here that it goes a long way to change the attitudes of society towards women.

We as women object to the fact that we are the only ones who among other things have to take contraceptives, while men need not even worry about that while the task of making kids is undertaken by both parties. Why hasn't medicine invented a contraceptive for men? This inconsiderate attitude of the society towards women is now a norm. People don't see anything wrong with that, they think there is absolutely nothing wrong with it, that its normal."

Struggle To Create New People

"The liberation of this country will be meaningless as long as it does not include completely changing society, or the creation of a new person.

SAYCO does not separate the struggle of women from the broad national democratic struggle."

On the question of protection of women against rape Dipuo believes that organised women in African communities are seldom victims of rape because tsotsis are often scared of anything associated to or called a comrade.

Dipuo says:

"To my knowledge no rape of a comrade has ever been reported — I don't say comrades haven't been raped, I'm merely emphasising that this seldom happens".

On the question of why women get left behind, or why there are so few women in organisation Dipuo says:

"At the age of eight a boy is allowed to go out and play while a girl is taught household chores and told how vulnerable she is in the outside world. She must always stay indoors. And still while she is indoors she doesn't question her

elders when taught the do's and don'ts.

She will grow up with this attitude of not questioning things until she goes out. The boy on the other hand meets challenges outside and develops his own point of view which he learns to defend, by debating, and fighting if possible. So when they come into organisations it usually takes a long time before they develop self assertiveness and confidence in themselves.

Equal exposure of the outside world for a boy and a girl will in the long run make nonsense of the belief that boys were born cleverer than girls."

Changing Attitudes

How can these attitudes be changed?

Dipuo believes that these attitudes will change if women are mobilised and actively involved in



Boys sharing housework will free girls

Steve Hilton Barber, Afrapix

organisation. SAYCO, she says, is deeply concerned about the need for organising women. This is why SAYCO agreed to form a womens subcommittee within SAYCO at their 1988 Congress and appointed Dipuo as national organiser to realise this task.

SAYCO is working towards a women's conference. SAYCO says that every effort must be made to organise women at local, regional and national levels. SAYCO women were urged to join FEDSAW (Federation of South African Women) or any other regionally based womens organisation in addition to SAYCO.

A few months after the meeting which decided these things SAYCO leadership were detained. Dipuo escaped detention. She said "I had gone to prepare food for my baby and change her nappy when the police arrived. They arrested Rapu Molekane and beat him in an attempt to force him to reveal my whereabouts. He did not

reveal this to them. He only told them that I took my child Tumi to the hospital as she fell ill during the meeting.

These detentions and the state attack on youth organisation meant that all energy was put into consolidating remaining youth structures."

Stop Living in Shadows

Dipuo's message to women is clear. She says: "As women we do not have to wait for events to give us direction, but we have to direct and actively involve ourselves in the events. We must avoid living in the shadows of our boyfriends or husbands. We must be seen as individuals within our own personalities and strive for recognition as such.

Standing in the shadows of boyfriends or husbands means we will fall if those shadows are removed."



Young women at a funeral in Tembisa

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