

BUILDERS OF THE NATION

9

SERVICE WORKERS

Service workers are the unsung heroes and heroines of South Africa. They help and care for people in schools, hospitals, in their homes and places of work. The majority of service workers are women. For the first time, the 1996 Labour Relations Act covers all categories of occupations and service workers.

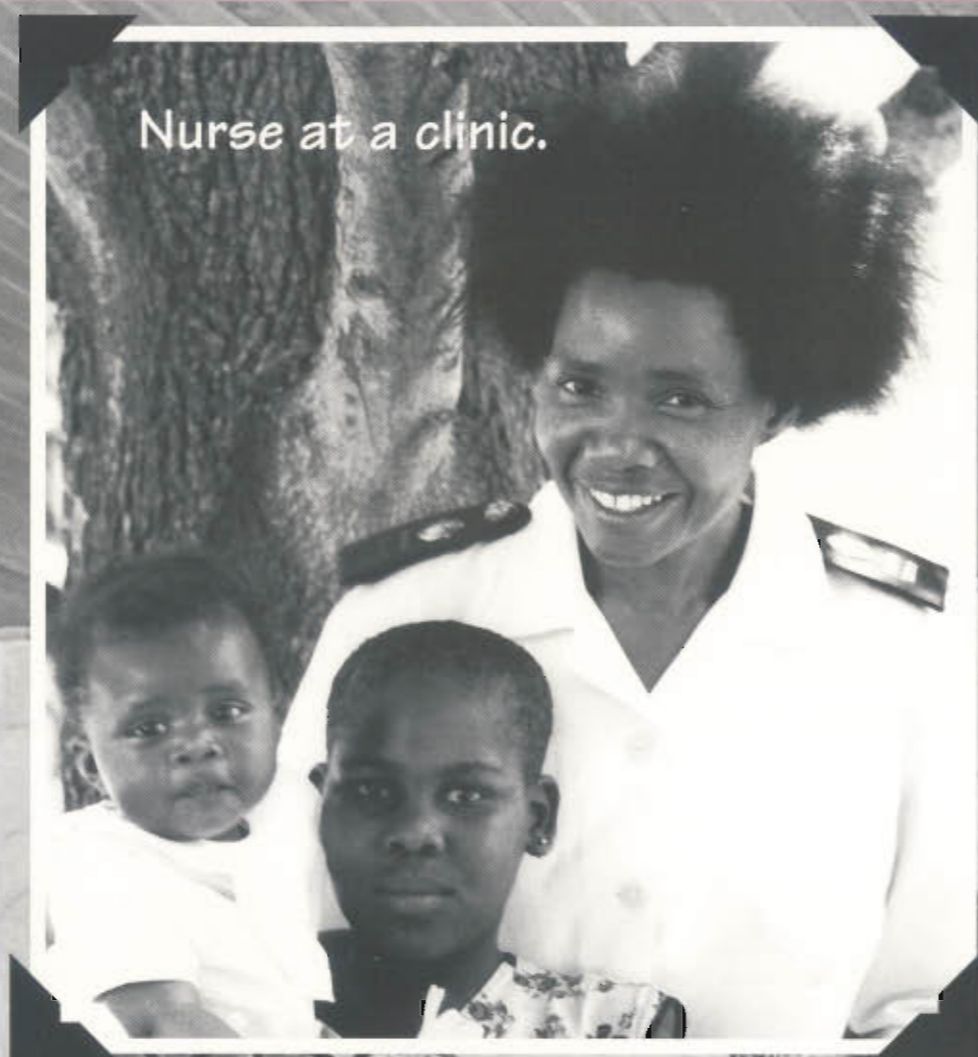


An office cleaner.

Photo: Lesly Lawson



The public service sector keeps the city clean.



Nurse at a clinic.



Photo: Museum Africa



Photo: Lewson

A mission school, 1940s.



The nursing and teaching professions have for many years provided opportunities for educated black women in particular to improve their chances in life; but, until the end of the apartheid era, they earned little more than labourers. Despite their heavier workload, black nurses and teachers also earned considerably less than their white counterparts; they campaigned for many long and hard years for equal wages.

Domestic workers (who form the largest service sector in South Africa), worked in even more difficult conditions because they often worked alone, dependent upon their employers for accommodation. They worked long and irregular hours - scrubbing, cleaning, polishing, cooking, washing, ironing, child-minding, nursing, gardening.

The work, care and skills of the men and women who serve the communities are essential to the well-being of our people. We salute the service workers of our nation.

Text by Lull Callinicos. Design and illustrations by Jon Berndt, MEDIAWORKS