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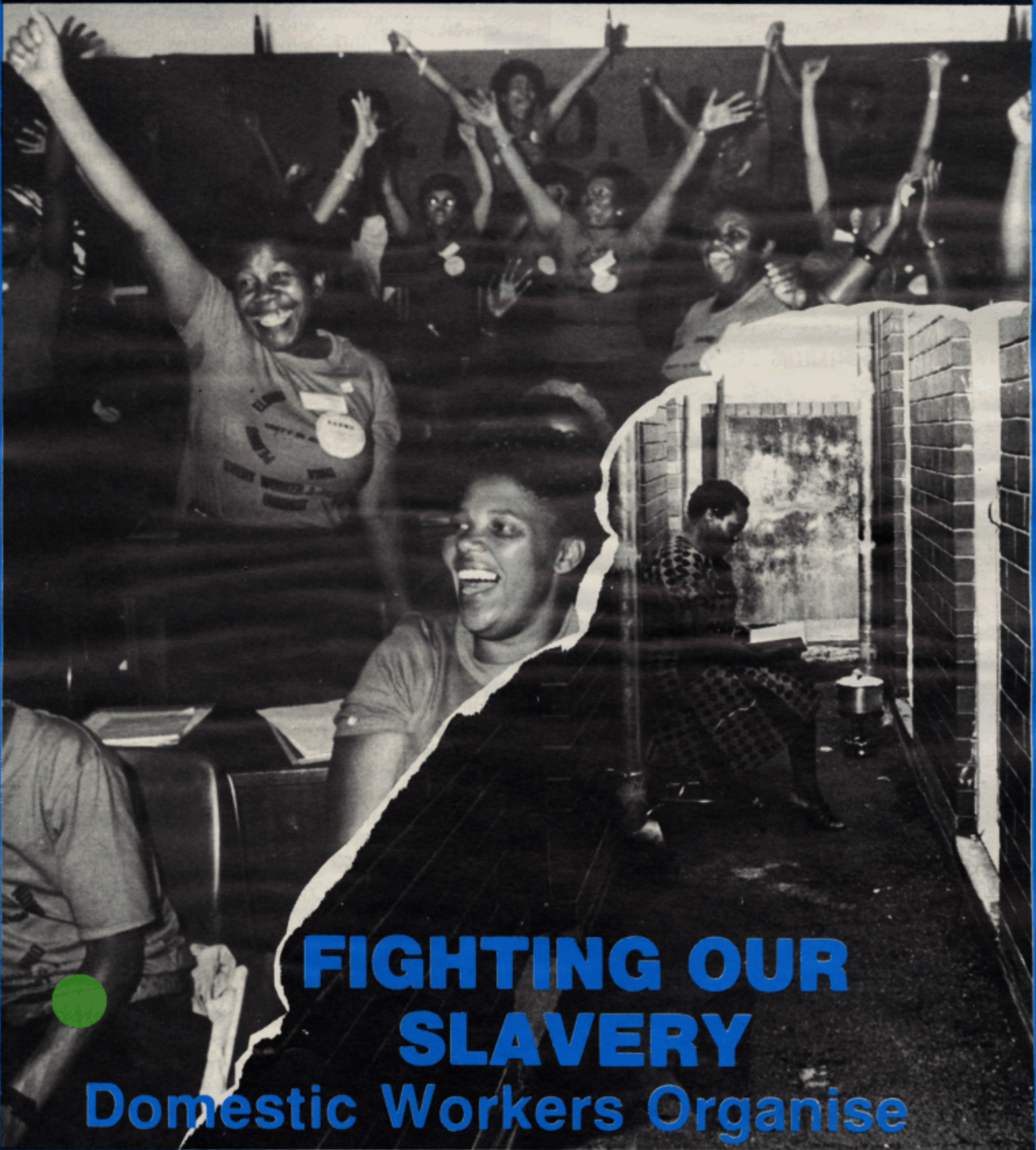
9 JUN 1988

WOS SPEAK



AUG - OCT. 1987

NO. 16



FIGHTING OUR SLAVERY

Domestic Workers Organise



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SPEAK'S office is in Durban. Our address is:

SPEAK Collective
Office 14
The Ecumenical Centre
20 St Andrew's Street
Durban
4001

Our telephone number is: 3011 624

SPEAK Collective members are: Karen, Phumelele, Shamim and Vanessa. Thanks to Caroline, Debbie, Irna and Susan for helping with this issue!

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.

Cover photographs - Guy Tillim and Gisele Wulfsohn of Afrapix.

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LETTERS

Dear Friends

I've read the March-May 1987 issue, No. 14. I find it very interesting and meaningful, its like coming together and supporting one another in our hardships, and struggling against unemployment, poverty, apartheid, oppression, ill-treatment and exploitation.

Is it possible for you to send me SPEAK magazine from issue No. 1 to No. 13? If possible please keep me informed of the cost.

Thanking you
Veronica Samuel
Chatsworth, Durban

Dear Veronica, your letter is very encouraging. We hope that as more women get to read SPEAK they will write and tell us what kind of articles and stories they would like to read about. We can send you back copies of SPEAK. They cost 30 cents each, plus the postage costs. We look forward to hearing from you! - SPEAK Collective

Dear SPEAK Collective

We the Women's Group of Tongaat congratulate you all for this most wonderful magazine. Your magazine has taught women so many things. One of the most important things is the rights of women, the problems and hardships ones faces. If all women can join hands we're sure we can fight for anything we want. We hope your magazine SPEAK can make lots of women speak out.

Love
Tongaat Women's Aid
Tongaat, Durban

Dear sisters, we were very pleased to get your letter. We hope that many more women will make their voices heard through SPEAK. And, we agree with you, through unity and organising there is nothing that we cannot achieve - SPEAK

Dear SPEAK

I read your magazine. My heart was sore when I read the OK article and found that there are men who destroy the struggle. I read about the problems those women had with their husbands. I was disappointed that some men were very hard on their wives because they were taking part in the OK strike.

As far as I am concerned my wife forms a very important part of my life. I do not think that by marrying her she is my slave. We agreed that we will share everything we do at home. Another thing is that we need to trust each other. If one of you is going to a meeting, tell each other when it is and when it is likely to finish. Before you do anything to your wife, ask yourself if you would like her to do it to you. If the answer is no, then do not do it.

Suppose you are both working, the man arrives first at home. It is very good to start helping with cooking and looking after children. There must always be a day you choose to cook and do housework. Helping your wife with housework shows that you have love and understanding, and that she is a human being like you. She also works hard at work and yet she still has to come back and work just as hard at home.

Do you think it is fair if a man finishes work at 3.30pm and goes to drink with friends and comes home late at night to demand food from his wife who only finished work at 5.30pm? She is also the last person to sleep and the first to wake

up. She washes, cleans, and prepares food for everybody. All the man does is fill his stomach and wear clean clothes, take food to eat at work, and come back first to drink with friends. Do you think that is fair?

Give your wife her right to take part in her union and in the community that she lives in. If they make her responsible for something, support her because they find her capable. Allow her to meet and share ideas with others. She must not feel as if she is in jail by marrying you.

Those men who forced their wives not to take part in the strike show that they rely on them to look after their families. I do not understand why a man cannot support his wife when fighting exploitation that we all hate. Why are you not proud of her being in the struggle?

I believe that if you really love your wife, you support and help her in everything she does.

Thank you, SPEAK

Yours

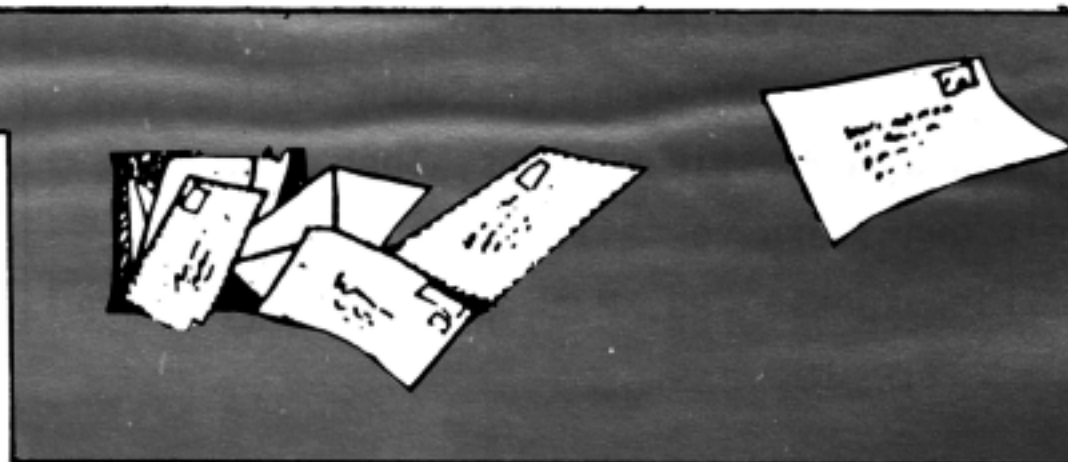
Alfred T Qabula, Durban

Dear Alfred, thank you for your letter. We are glad that the O.K. women have made their voices heard. We agree with you that marriage should mean sharing equally in all things and respecting each other's rights. We are very glad that there are men like you who are also fighting for this - SPEAK Collective

Dear SPEAK readers

We are from a women's organisation called Rape Crisis. We share support and advice with women who have suffered from being raped, battered, and abused. We know that many thousands of women have stories to tell of these bad experiences. We need advice. We want to know from women how best we can put our organisation to use.

So, we are going to have a 'phone-in' We want women to phone us and share their stories. We will not ask for names. We just want to collect stories and experiences. We hope that this will give us a better idea of the problems and feelings of women in South Africa. This way, we can start sharing ideas on what to do about this violence against women.



The 'phone-in' starts at 6pm on Friday August 21, and ends at 6pm on Sunday 23 August. You can phone at any time during these days. Members of our organisation will be there to answer calls. In Durban, the telephone number is: (031) 812203.

This 'phone in' is going to happen all over the country. Phone us if you want to know more about it at (031) 232323.

In sisterhood
Rape Crisis, Durban

FIGHTING OUR SLAVERY

Domestic Workers Organise

"I have been a domestic worker all my working life. I earn R80.00 a month and I have been with my present employer for 14 years. I work six and a half days a week. Unless I ask, I do not get a weekend off. I get two weeks holiday every February.

My day starts at 6.30 am. It ends when the evening meal has been cooked and the dishes washed. After that I watch television until 9.30pm with my employer. My employer is a widow and does not like to be alone. At present I have no pension scheme. I do not know whether my employer will provide a pension scheme for me when I am too old to work. I am 66 years old."

This is Rose's story. She works in Durban. Most domestic workers are women. There are more than 800 000 women in South Africa working as domestic workers. They each have their own story to tell. But they all have similar experiences. Much of their lives are

taken up with doing housework and caring for families. If it isn't for the employer then it is for her own family. As Elsie said, "I cook for my husband. He's tired from work, lifting up heavy boxes and iron. Sometimes we come in at the same time. He wants his tea. He'll sit down with the paper. You will be a 'girl' again in the house." Most domestic workers hardly ever see their families.

DOMESTIC WORKERS GET A RAW DEAL

Factory workers and shopworkers are protected by laws. These laws set out minimum working conditions, like hours of work, sick leave, holidays and minimum wages. For many years factory workers and shop workers have come together in their factories and shops. They have built trade unions. They have used their united strength to fight for better wages and working conditions, and more control in their workplace.

Photograph by Lesley Lawson

Gisele Wulfso



But domestic workers and farm workers get a raw deal. They are not protected by the laws that protect factory and shop workers.

A UNION FOR DOMESTIC WORKERS

Over the years, domestic workers have organised to take up their problems so that they can change their lives. In November 1986 all domestic workers associations from around the country met in Cape Town. They came with one thing in mind. To form one big union for domestic workers. Everybody knows that unity means strength. The new union is called the South African Domestic Workers' Union (SADWU) and has 20 000 members. Now SADWU has joined the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) to be even stronger. COSATU is a federation of many trade unions. More than 700 000 workers, from different unions, make up COSATU. "COSATU is a worker organisation and it is going to support our union," said Nyami, a SADWU organiser in Durban. The law still does not recognise domestic worker unions, but SADWU and COSATU are ready for the long struggle ahead.

SPEAK met some domestic workers from Durban. Some are members of SADWU. They spoke about life as domestic workers, and about their union.

WHAT CAN YOU DO WITH R60.00?

Domestic workers' wages and hours of work are not laid down by law. Most domestic workers earn about R100.00 a month. But for many it is less. And in some country towns women earn as little as R30.00 a month. They and their families are expected to live on this money. Often the domestic worker is the only breadwinner.

MOST DOMESTIC WORKERS, THEY WORK OVERTIME

For factory workers when the bell goes, that's it, that's the end of the day. But for most domestic workers, work never ends. And this is more so for those domestic workers who live on their employer's property. Zandile told SPEAK, "They say to you: 'You don't have to go off early because you stay here, you don't have to catch a bus.' Zandile went on to say, "This week end working business must stop now! We don't feel happy about working the whole Saturday and Sunday. Really, it's on top of our children. Maria told SPEAK, "At the end of the month they have to give us the weekend off, so that those with kids that are so far away can go and see them." Even on the day off the employer tries to get her worker to do some work. As Maria said, "They call us and say: 'Do you want some tea?' Because she wants you to wash the dishes!"

frapix



Photograph by Lesley Lawson



"Sometimes you babysit until 2 o'clock in the morning, and 'Thank you!', they give you R1.00. If you're lucky.! Sometimes it's nothing."

"WHEN YOU'RE OLD, YOU ARE NOT HAVING ANYTHING"

Domestic workers do not get pension or unemployment insurance. Zandile told us: "When you are old, you lose your job. You lose your room. They say to you: 'Go and ask for an old age pension.' 'Where is your home?' Sometimes she didn't even know whether you have children or whether you had a house. 'Don't you have children?' she asks you, 'Can't you go home now to have your pension, you are very, very old now.' Sometimes domestic workers work for about 40 years for one employer, but when she is old, she is not having a house, she is not having anything."

"WHEN YOU'VE GOT A BABY, YOU LOSE YOUR JOB. THATS ALL"

By law, domestic workers have no maternity benefits. "As soon as you are pregnant, the employer starts to tell you that you must try and organise what you are going to do with the baby. But what usually happens is that after you come back you are dismissed, because the employer is used to the new worker. You were not even paid for the time you were on maternity leave. When you've got a baby, you lose your job. That's all." Some employers allow their domestic workers to keep their babies for a while. "Only a few mothers can keep their children for a year," said Maria, "And when you've got to work, you've got to look after her children, and lock yours in the room."

"WE DON'T NEED TO LIVE IN A BACK YARD"

Like farmworkers, domestic workers often

live in their employer's property. So they are under their employer's control more than factory and shop workers. And domestic workers face their employers alone. They don't have support of each other like workers in the factory. Each domestic worker works alone for one employer. She gets to know her employer very well. "It is hard to challenge your boss when you are a domestic worker because domestic work is sort of 'friendship work'. It's not like the factory where you can change the department and go and work under a new manager or a new foreman," says Nyami.

Most domestic workers live in their employers' backyards. Those backyards are often not fit for people to live in. "We need our own homes to live with our children," said Zandile, "We don't need to live in a back yard. That's why we can't strike, because we live there. Each and every employer knows that we haven't got houses. And you depend on her."

BUILDING OUR UNION

It is not easy to organise domestic workers. SADWU helps domestic workers to know their rights. Domestic workers are trained to negotiate with their employers so that they can improve their conditions at work. "Every domestic worker is a shopsteward." She has to fight all of her battles herself. The first thing is to get the workers to understand what the union is. Maria told us: "All over Durban we have branches. At the branch meetings we always explain about SADWU." Workers also go to workshops to learn about the union and about organising as domestic workers. Once workers have joined the union they talk to other workers in the street where they work. This way, they organise them into the union. This is how the union grows. Workers who work in the

same street are then organised into street committees. "The street committees are the foundation of our union," said Maria. She told us how domestic workers start a street committee: "You go sometimes, to the shops and there you meet other domestic workers. You talk to them about the union. Sometimes you carry pamphlets to give to them to read. You go to where they work and talk to them about the union. And then you make a day 'Could you come and visit me at my house so that we could talk?' It could be one person, it could be two. It doesn't matter how many you get because you could talk to those today and tomorrow you talk to others."

Even those who haven't joined the union are invited to street meetings. At these meetings everyone is kept aware of what is happening in the union.

"When people come with problems to the office, that is also how we organise them. Most of the people who come to the office

with problems are not members, they are people who have disputes with the employers. After they've been helped, they are told about how domestic workers are organised in the area where they work."

IT IS NOT EASY TO GET DOMESTIC WORKERS TO JOIN THE UNION

"Some of the domestic workers lose their jobs as soon as the employer notices that they have come under the union. Most of them, they hide that they've gone to the union. Most of the employers are not happy about our union. They know that we know they are treating us badly," Maria said.

It is not easy for domestic workers to go to meetings because of the long hours they work. And often it is hard for women to be in the union. Husbands and boyfriends do not always like them to be involved. Maria said that when she was married, it was very hard to be active in the union.





Strength in unity! Domestic workers at the launch of SADWU in November 1986

JOINING HANDS TO FIGHT FOR OUR RIGHTS

Domestic workers have a long fight ahead. Their struggle is especially hard because they have no laws to protect them. Through SADWU, domestic workers are joining hands to fight for the day when they have the same rights as other workers. But SADWU does not stop at this. Along with COSATU, SADWU is fighting for a South Africa where there is no exploitation and everyone has the right to a decent life.

This is a domestic workers' song from the United States of America -
 We're from the nursery
 And from the laundry too;
 We're coming from the kitchen
 Where there's always work to do.
 We're joining hands in friendship
 And we're joining in song,
 If we build the union together
 It will make us strong!

BUILDING OUR UNION

Here is a list of different branches of SADWU around the country!

SADWU
 20 St Andrew's St.
 Durban
 4001
Tel: 305 1322

SADWU
 5 Long St.
 Mowbray
 Cape Town
 7700
Tel: 692 112

SADWU
 I.M.S. Building
 34 Murchison St.
 Newcastle
Tel: 21651

SADWU
 37 Morris St.
 Empangeni
 3880
Tel: 27063

SADWU
 507 Atlantic House
 16 Corporation St.
 Cape Town
 8001
Tel: 456 384

SADWU
 P.O. Box 1502
 East London
 5200

SADWU
 165 Pietermaritz St.
 Pietermaritzburg
 3201
Tel: 39630



LADY OF LEISURE

by Ayesha Badat

Here is a poem I have written. I am a mother of five and a grandmother of two. I am a saleswoman and run a small shop in Maritzburg. My formal education ended when I finished standard four as my parents didn't think that a girl should be educated!

I've washed the dishes, scrubbed the floors,
Polished the lounge, dusted the doors,
The washing is hanging out on the line
I only hope the weather stays fine.
The ironing, for once is up to date
(Though that's the job I most hate)
I've done the shopping, baked some cakes.
I've worked so hard, how my head aches.

I've weeded the garden, cut the grass,
Shampooed the carpet, cleaned the brass.
I've defrosted the fridge, mended a fuse
Hurried and scurried, with no time to lose.

I've sewn the button back on a shirt
Put up the hem of my daughter's new skirt.
Windows are cleaned, the salad is made
Supper is cooked, the table is laid.

Hubby walks in and what does he say?
Not darned that sock?
But you've had all day!



The woman in the photograph is a single parent living in a one-roomed house in Merebank, Durban. She works a double shift - seeing to her job in a shoe factory during the day, and to her home in the early mornings and evenings.

WOMEN MAKING HISTORY

We slipped out of our houses before anyone was awake, before the day itself was up. As we hurried to our meeting place in the wintry light of the quiet streets, we felt again for the piece of paper folded in our pockets. How can you know the excitement we felt, divided as it was between hope and fear? We met in small groups, our relief at seeing each other expressed in excited whispers, laughter at the imagined reactions of our husbands.

It was our day, the day we'd planned for months.

At the railway station were many more groups of women and the reality of being there together made us forget the doubts we'd had washing and dressing in our silent houses.

We began the singing before we were on the train, great waves of song. And when the first train came in, the women at the windows were singing too.

There were a few men on the train, workers of the early shift. We teased them, we were so proud of our mission: you thought we knew nothing about politics but we're not going to carry passes like you, we will not be stopped in the streets by police, raided at night by the blackjacks. We are mothers, we can't go to jail as often as you do. The coaches were filled with us, we were everywhere.

We'd come from all parts of the country for our day. By the time our train reached the capital, dawn had broken and before we spilled out into the streets, the word had been around: processions are banned today; to avoid arrest, walk in groups of three.

Buses and cars filled with chanting women had arrived. By now we were thousands.

How can I describe our feeling walking together, how can you know what it was like?

We were wearing the green and black of liberation, or tribal dress, brilliant proud colours. We walked with babies on our backs, children at our sides. We were a moving body of colour and song. We weren't Xhosa, Zulu or Sotho, we weren't Indian, coloured or white. We were women making history.

WE COME AS WOMEN UNITED IN OUR PURPOSE
TO SAVE THE AFRICAN WOMEN FROM THE
DEGRADATION OF PASSES. FOR TO US, AN
INSULT TO AFRICAN WOMEN IS AN INSULT TO
ALL WOMEN.

By the time we reached the government buildings we were twenty thousand. You've never seen twenty thousand women

together. We signed the papers for the prime minister. He wasn't there to see us, he missed such a sight. Then we waited in silence. A heavy silence that was as strong as we were many. And then again we sang: Now you have touched the women, you have struck a rock, you have dislodged a boulder, you will be crushed. Yes of course today we carry passes. In the end we had to: we couldn't get work, receive our pensions, even register our children if we didn't. But that August day almost thirty years ago showed us our strength. That day we were women.

This story comes from a book called 'The Parrots Egg', by A. Blondel, S. Lamb and A. Hashemian. Published by Raven Press.



9 AUGUST 1956

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9 AUGUST 1956

GIRLS SOLD AS SLAVES

In some mountain areas in Taiwan people are very poor. To get money to survive some families are forced to sell their young daughters. They sell them to men who own brothels in the city. Brothels are places where men pay to have sex. These girls are turned into slaves. Some of them are only twelve years old. The brothel owners keep all the money. The girls do not have any say over their lives, and they do not get any of the money. They are like prisoners.

Many girls are forced to have sex with about 30-50 men a day. The youngest girls are given injections to make their bodies grown quicker so that they can "Give the men more pleasure."

This does not only happen in Taiwan. Many women are traded from poor to rich countries as well. When there is poverty, women are often the ones who suffer the most.

Yesterday Today and Tomorrow

This photograph was taken at the South African Domestic Workers' day of choirs, in Durban.

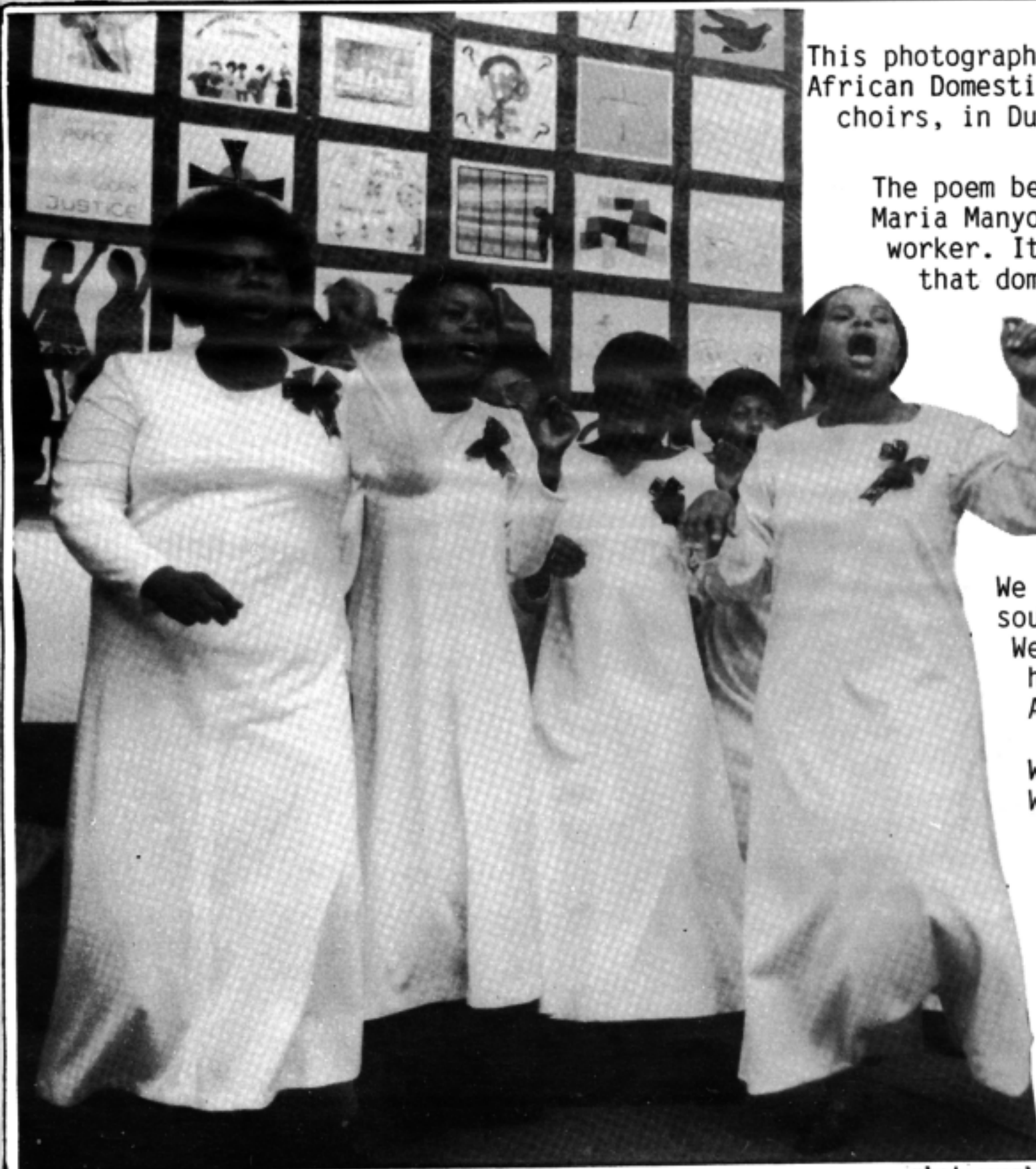
The poem below was written by Maria Manyoni, She is a domestic worker. It is about the day that domestic workers went to Pretoria. They went to try and change the law so that they could have some of the same rights as other workers.

We slide past you like a
soundless vehicle
We pray but they do not
hear us
As if they have no ears

What we want
We shall obtain

To Pretoria we went
Bald heads glittered
But there we were
tricked

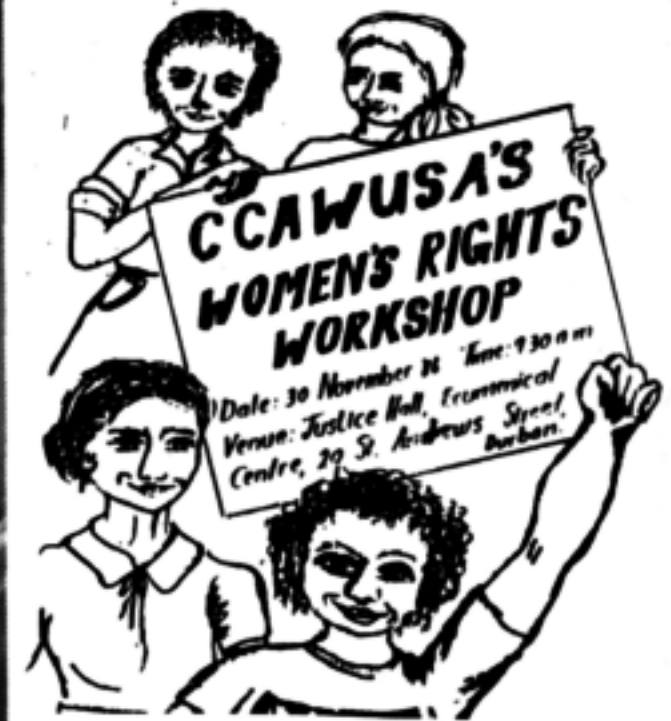
Workers will overcome
Through unity.



photograph by Jeeva Rajgopaul Afrapix



Woman worker speaking at a OK. Bazaars meeting



Ccawusa organised a Womens Rights Workshop
At this workshop women decided that they must fight in their unions and workplaces for womens rights to be taken up.

COSATU is taking up women's issues in their campaign for a living wage. Women workers are saying:

Many of us are breadwinners. The bosses use 'being women' as an excuse to pay us low wages and make more profits. We must earn the same as men. We are workers just as they are. We work a double-shift - one at work and one at home. We are raped, assaulted, and treated as sex-objects. Like men, we are forced to carry the dompas. We are

often the first to be retrenched because bosses use our pregnancies to break our service. We are afraid to let our pregnancies show because we may get fired. We have miscarriages because we try to hide our pregnancies and we work in unsafe jobs. We can't get houses. We are the ones to leave school early so that our brothers can get an education. We need training, we need union education so that we can, like men workers, take up an equal place in our workplaces and in our unions.

KITSKONSTABELS

Many people are worried about these new 'kitskonstabels' who have been sent to the townships. And they have reason to be. These men get only three weeks training and are given guns. They are told to keep 'law and order' in the townships.

In June this year, two seventeen year old girls and their friends were taken to the Nyanga police station in the eastern Cape. They were accused of being comrades. Said one of the girls: "During the assaults, a special constable said I would be released if I had sex with him. When I refused, he forcefully touched my breasts and private parts and hit me."

RUBBING SALT ON A WOUND

Nombuyiselo Kheswa is a domestic worker who lives in Umlazi. She recently lost 10 members of her family from mushroom poisoning. They were dying one after the other within a few days. Her family is very poor. They did not even have money to bury all these people. She survived because she did not eat the mushrooms. During this time she did not go to work.

When she went back to work after the funeral, her employer fired her. Her employer did not listen to her story. She said she had read about it in the newspaper. She asked Nombuyiselo, "Who do you think was looking after my family while you were away?" That is all she wanted to know.

Nombuyiselo said: "To me this was like rubbing salt on a open wound. I realised how hard some employers are to their workers. Even though my family is poor, I could not beg anymore."



photos from Outwrite

In June this year, 20 000 protestors gathered together outside Durham Prison. This is the prison where many women political prisoners are kept in Northern Ireland.

The protesters stand there in solidarity with the women prisoners. They are also there to protest against the endless body strip searches which the prisoners often forced to go through. During these

strip searches, prisoners are forced to strip naked and stand in front of prison warders to see whether they have anything hidden on them.

More than anything, these strip searches seem to happen to break down the spirit of the prisoners. The strip searches do not have to happen. The prison authorities can use other ways of checking prisoners.

WHAT A CHEEK!

A man divorced his wife because she didn't have any children. He said that it was her fault that she didn't become pregnant. Did he ever stop to think that maybe it was a problem with him? No! Never! The thought didn't even enter his head.

Then guess what? She married another man and had two beautiful babies! But her ex-husband did not tell his family that they were divorced. So, when he heard of her children, he had the cheek to say that the children were his!

Women are not 'baby machines.' And it is time that men face up to the fact that if a woman does not fall pregnant, it can easily be a problem with the man. After all, it takes two to make a baby, doesn't it?!



It's child's play!

Learning with water

Children and babies love to play with water. We've watched them enjoying a bath. They like to splash, feel and drink the water. Some children are happy to play like this for hours. And they make a big mess!



For mothers, bathing children is just another chore that fathers hardly ever share. But when children play with water they can learn new things. And this need not take too much of your time. There are times every day for children to play with water. When they wash hands and faces, or bath, try and let them take a little longer over it.

WATER PLAY THINGS

These things are nice for children to have when playing with water:

old squeeze bottles, tea strainers, sponges, corks, plastic cups and jugs, plastic balls and bottles, empty food tins (Be sure they don't have sharp edges)



If you leave your children with these things and some water they can play by themselves. On hot days you could even give your child a dish or bucket of water to play with outside. But remember, babies and children can drown in a few centimetres of water. So make sure you can see the children while they play. Or get an older child to watch them.



POURING AND FILLING

Children like to pour water and fill things with water. Plastic bottles, cups, jugs and food tins can be filled and emptied. Children will pour water from one container to another. You can even make small holes in some of the containers so that your child can watch the water running out. Tea strainers and sponges are also fun.



When you get the time, have some water play with your children. If you talk about the containers your child can learn the meaning of tall, narrow, short and wide. Children can learn that containers that look different can hold the same amount of water.



FLOATING AND SINKING

Children can learn about floating and sinking. You could give them wood, corks, sticks, leaves and closed empty bottles to float. Things like stones, full bottles and metal spoons will sink. Your child could have fun finding out which things float and which things sink.

CHANGING WATER

You can change the feel, look and taste of water. Water feels wet. We can make it feel sticky by adding honey, sugar. It can be made slippery by adding soap and oil. Water can be made colder or hotter. Add ice to make it colder, warm water to make it hotter.

Water looks clear. Get your child to try putting in things like salt, sand, sugar and oil. This way they will find out that not all things dissolve in water. Some things change the taste of water. Add sugar, lemon juice, jelly crystals or vinegar. Get your child to try all of these things out!



SPEAK thanks Sara from Northlawn Women's Circle, Phoenix, and Early Learning Resource Unit, Athlone for their help!

AGENDA

A JOURNAL ABOUT WOMEN AND GENDER No 1

AGENDA is an exciting new journal for and about women. It hopes to offer a forum for comment, discussion and debate on all parts of women's lives. We hope that this will be done by women themselves. AGENDA will include articles, interviews, life stories, photos, poetry, drawings



There are special rates for unemployed women, workers and students. If you want to know more, please write to us: AGENDA c/o SOCIOLOGY DEPT UNIVERSITY OF NATAL KING GEORGE V AVE DURBAN 4001



IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO TELL YOUR STORY OR WRITE A POEM SEND IT TO: **SPEAK COLLECTIVE** P.O. BOX 19375 DOMERTON 4015



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rape crisis

RAPE CRISIS is a women's organisation. It advises women who have been raped or sexually abused. It also does research into why rape happens. We are in Durban. If you would like to talk to us phone: (031) 232323 or 295123.

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SKIN LIGHTENERS

BANNED AT LAST!

Community organisations in some parts of the country have been fighting together with concerned skin doctors to stop the sale of skin lightening creams. They have won at last. The government has passed a law to ban the sale of skin lightening creams. This law has been passed because skin lightening creams have hydroquinone in them. Hydroquinone is very dangerous. It is good that this law has been passed because these creams have destroyed the skins of many black people.

The new law was passed on 22nd May 1987. It says that firms must stop making these dangerous creams by the end of August 1987. Shopkeepers must sell what they have by May 1988. This means that a person who carries on selling skin lighteners after 22nd May 1988 will be breaking the law. This law came after long battles of trying to force the government to do something about skin lightening creams that are destroying people's skins.

People need to know about this law. It is a pity that many people who use these



Photograph by Learn and Teach

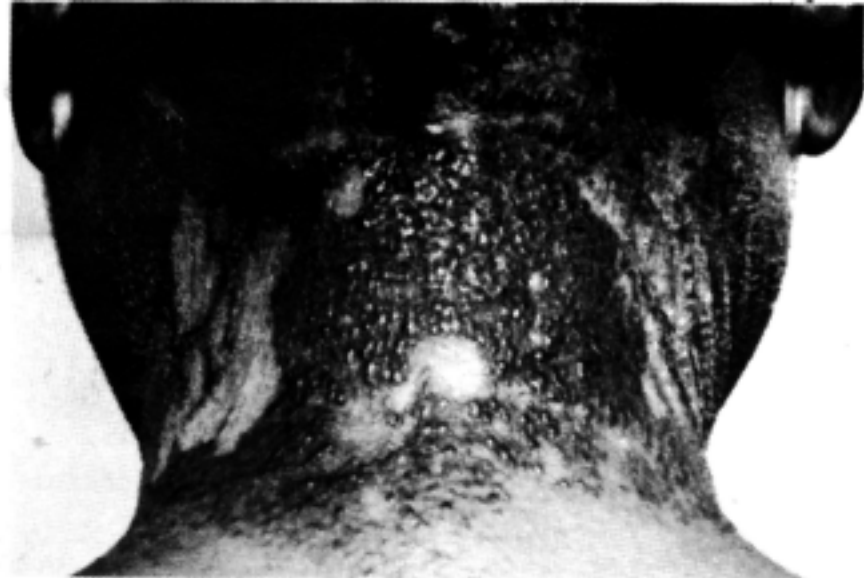
Skin lightening creams, lotions and soaps that have hydroquinone in them cause damage to our skins.

creams cannot even read. In fact, it is interesting to note that laws that say what we can and cannot read about in newspapers and hear about over the radio are made known everyday. Yet nobody worries to make sure that we know what is not good for our skins.

PERMANENT DAMAGE

Many women and some men use these dangerous creams on their faces and necks. The hydroquinone in the cream makes the skin whiter than other parts of the body. After going in the sun, the skin on the face and neck starts to get dark and sometimes swells. It takes about 3 to 4 years before this happens.

Because it takes so long for the black patches to show, most people do not believe that they are from using creams. This is why most people do not believe that the dark patches are from using these creams. That is why some of them continue to use these creams. They hope that they will look whiter again.



The neck of a woman who has been using skin lightening creams

It is very difficult for a person to accept that she has to live with those dark marks forever. Women often ask for help from doctors or chemists. Some doctors usually give cortisone cream to make black marks and swelling better.

But cortisone creams cause more harm. Pimples develop, stretch-marks and bleeding under the skin. A skin doctor we spoke to said she sees people everyday coming for help. "Women come to me wanting something to remove black marks. They do not believe me when I say the skin has been damaged forever. They become very discouraged. You can see that they can even commit suicide."

WHY PEOPLE USE CREAMS

People sometimes use creams for other reasons either than lightening their skins. Some use them to soften their skins. Others use them to treat bad skins. Most people use skin lighteners not knowing that they are dangerous and they cause permanent skin damage. One woman we spoke to feels that people who use skin lighteners should not be blamed. "Most people do not have money to have their skins treated. You also wait the whole day at the hospital to get advice about your skin problem," she



~~Trust these products~~

said. These creams are much cheaper than going to see a doctor. They can also be found at the nearest supermarket. That is why people buy them.

WHEN DID IT START?

Skin lightening creams were first sold in the 1960s. It was not known then that they would cause such damage. A few years later, people who had been using these creams started to have patches on the face and neck. Skin doctors found that it was the hydroquinone that caused problems. The industry was told to reduce hydroquinone from 7% to 3%. People continued to develop black patches even with less hydroquinone. They now walk around with bad looking faces that they can do nothing about.

MAKING MONEY OUT OF US

The firms that make these creams have made a lot of money. And they have caused a lot of damage to many people, especially women. These creams are sold through advertising. Women are used in

these adverts to try and show how successful they can be if they look fair. People are made to believe that a woman is only worth something if she is beautiful. In fact, women are made to believe that a person is beautiful if she uses a cream to make her skin fair.

LET PEOPLE KNOW

We need to fight these ideas about beauty in our organisations and in our communities. Women should be made aware of being used by advertisers. In the end we suffer for having allowed ourselves to be used this way. We need to tell other people about this new law banning skin lighteners. It is important that everybody knows about it. People who sell these creams can only be happy if the community does not know about this law.

Most adverts say that we must trust these creams for a beautiful skin. But, we must only trust ourselves not to use anything our skin that has hydroquinone.



Trust yourself! Look out for this warning on creams lotions and soaps

WARNING | Contains Hydroquinone | Avoid contact with eyes. Do not use to dye eyelashes or eyebrows. Rinse eyes immediately if product comes in contact with them. If skin irritation develops, use of this product should be discontinued or a physician consulted. Not recommended for children under 12 years of age. If no lightening is seen after two months of treatment, use of this product should be discontinued. Depigmentation (lightening effect) may not be noticeable when used on a very dark skin. This product is intended to lighten skin and not to prevent sunburn. Avoid prolonged exposure to sun in order to prevent darkening reoccurring

"I HAVE SEEN THE RAYS OF OUR NEW SOUTH AFRICA RISING"

**"You who have no work, speak.
You who have not homes, speak.
You who have no schools, speak.
You who have to run like chickens
from the vulture, speak
Let us share our problems so that
we can solve them together.
We must free ourselves.
Men and women must share
housework.
Men and women must work**

**together in the home and out
in the world.
There are no creches and nursery
schools for our children.
There are no homes for the aged.
There is no-one to care for the sick.
Women must unite to fight for
these rights.
I opened the road for you.
You must go forward."**

**Dora Tamana, April 1981
three quarters century in the struggle**

