

SPEAK

PUTTING WOMEN FIRST

No.65

OCTOBER 1994

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MANAGING EDITOR

Boitumelo Mofokeng

EDITOR

Thoraya Pandey

ASSISTANT EDITOR

Doreen Zimbizi

EDITORIAL ASSISTANT

Karen Hurt

JOURNALIST

Rosalee Telela

ADVERTISING

Boitumelo Mofokeng

RADIO/AUDIO

PROGRAMME

Libby Lloyd

Rita Thathe

VOLUNTARY

MANAGEMENT

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Gill Lincoln, Nise Malange,
Shamim Meer, Elinor Sisulu

DESIGN AND LAYOUT

Annette Griessel

Please note: SPEAK has moved offices. Our new physical address is 14 New Street South, Johannesburg

SPEAK OFFICES:

14 New Street South
Johannesburg 2001
South Africa

Telephone: (011) 836-5020
Fax: (011) 836-6064

POSTAL ADDRESS:

SPEAK, PO Box 556
Johannesburg 2000
South Africa

SUBSCRIPTION ENQUIRIES:

Edith van Greuning, NND
Phone Toll-free 0800 111 088
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Fanie Jason

COMMENT

The silent violence

After a few peaceful days of peace and joy during the elections, South Africa is back to a new wave of violence. Every day, we hear stories of violent crimes which claim so many lives, stories of children and women who have been kidnapped, raped, assaulted or murdered.

Although the increase in violent crime affects everybody, it is women and children who suffer most, for there is the silent violence in the home. These stories seldom get into the news.

At least 160 police force members were murdered in the first eight months of the year. These are people who are supposed to protect us from criminals. We must condemn these killings.

There is just no respect for human life and the law. What is frightening is that violence has almost become part of our culture.

We cannot allow this to continue. We all have to be part of stopping this violence and destruction. Let's join hands to build the peace and justice we fought so hard for.

Let's start to respect each other and value human life. This means putting an end to everything violent — from sexual harassment to murder.

Talk Back

Thanks to all our readers who have written in. Please keep your letters flowing. We are often forced to shorten letters because of space. Send your letters to:
**SPEAK, PO Box 556, Johannesburg 2000
South Africa**

Sexism in local government

The Women's Lobby (TWL) has been encouraging women to become candidates in local government elections. We think there are not enough women in local government negotiations, and we see little or no awareness among the negotiators that women should be included. True democracy means equal emphasis on non-sexism and non-racism.

TWL has requested that Mr Roelf Meyer, Minister of Local Government, in his meeting with the nine provincial premiers, should bring gender equality into the local government process.

When the Local Government Act is amended, the quota system should be considered to guard against gender imbalance. Quotas have been successful in other countries. In France, President Mitterand encourages a quota system for women, to ensure their equal participation in politics.

Research shows that women do well in local government. Many community and welfare workers are women and they know what services are needed in different communities. They also have the skills and qualifications for local government.

*Babette Kabak/Doris Ravenhill
TWL, Johannesburg*

Like the struggle to liberate this country, gender equality must

be tackled by both men and women. It is only through equal representation, especially in local government, that women will make their full contribution to the reconstruction of South Africa. We hope those in power will not forget this so soon. — Editor

My gratitude to SPEAK

I wish to thank you for the issues of SPEAK that I have been receiving. The perspective it has given me on women's lives in South Africa has truly been priceless and valuable. It is a treasure to receive your publication.

Originally it was being sent to me to reprint articles for my newsletter, *Conversations from Abroad*. I no longer have the money or time to continue with the newsletter. I have saved all the issues I have received and have donated them to my local library. Thousands of people will have access to them and I hope that they promote a better understanding of your country and the problems that you face. In thanksgiving for your good work.

*Leslie Maggie MacKenzie
USA*

We are very happy to hear that SPEAK was of such help to you. We hope those who use the library will find it equally

helpful. We wish you the best of luck in the future. — Editor

The porn debate

I liked the issues you covered in your August edition of SPEAK.

On the issue of pornography, I believe it is disgusting and should be banned. There are too many sick people who will take advantage of it. If it is unbanned, then let us see another form of pornography. How about men mating with dogs; a crocodile biting a man's leg with him laughing. Or a woman cutting a man's penis for sexual satisfaction; a 10-year-old girl castrating a rapist and cooking his testicles for him to become an anti-rapist.

I am not sick, I'm only trying to make you see the other side of this evil practice. I don't want to see any form of pornography and my wish is that it should never be allowed in this country.

Let me also take this opportunity to wish the deputy minister of Agriculture, Thoko Msane the best of luck in her new job. I also wish Deputy Minister Winnie Mandela luck, although I think she was only given the position to keep her busy so that she does not cause trouble. Good luck anyway.

*Abram Modisenyane
Benoni*

We appreciate your comments and we hope other people feel the same about the issues you raise. — Editor

Legalise abortion but....

I was strongly touched by an article on abortion in your August issue of SPEAK. I strongly believe that life starts immediately a woman conceives. But when does the unborn child start having rights?

I see no reason why abortion cannot be legalised. But I think the govern-

ment and parents should educate the youth about safe sex. This will reduce the number of unwanted pregnancies and the demand for abortion. Women who want to have an abortion should be counselled before and after the procedure.

To restore trust between men and women, men need to become more responsible, whether the pregnancies are planned or unplanned. Women resort to abortion because their partners abandon them when they become pregnant.

Raising children is a joint responsibility and men should participate equally.

*Mpho Khobotle
Eastern Cape*

Thank you for the nice letter. We certainly agree that sex education should go along with legalising abortion. — Editor

Offensive advert

On a visit to Cape Town recently, I was deeply upset to see a poster of a naked woman stuck onto a bus shelter in Gabriel Road, Plumstead.

This was an advertisement for Scope. I felt my rights as a woman had been violated by being forced to see that sort of material. The reason is that such adverts degrade women and thus assault my own dignity as a woman.

Could Scope please withdraw the advert and stop putting up adverts of this nature in public places.

*S Groves (Ms)
East London*

We strongly oppose the use of women as objects for whatever reason. The use of women's bodies in such a way is unacceptable. — Editor

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Kwa-Sophie

When gender counts for nothing

About a month ago, my friend gave birth to a lovely baby, after 72 hours of painful labour. Although her husband was not there to hold her hand, she was happy to have her friend, Grace, as her companion.

Her husband arrived about eight hours after the baby was born. The first thing he said was: "I hope its a boy. I don't want my sperm wasted".

My friend was so shocked, she couldn't even speak. She still cannot believe he did not even ask if she and the baby were okay. All he was worried about was the sex of the child. Despite his attitude, she is proud to be the mother of a healthy girl. Now she is trying to make up her mind whether she should waste her life on this man.



Class is not an issue

BBC Worldwide recently did a survey called 'Who Does What'. The results showed that whether they earn more or less than their partners, men tend to do considerably less housework.

I guess sexism is not a question of class or economic status as many say. So, the argument that poor and working class men are the only ones who are sexist is simply not true.

A question of mistaken identity

Recently one of SPEAK's partners in the Independent Magazine Group, Labour Bulletin, celebrated 20 years of publishing. A comment in the Weekly Mail and Guardian read: "The grandfather of the alternative press, Labour Bulletin..."

Don't they know that sexism and 'alternative' don't go together?

Quote of the Month

"Women become encouraged enough to take action... when they are sure that other women share their problems."

— *Sekiko Kikushima, a woman writer from Japan.*

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Winnie Mandela

THE PAIN AND THE PASSION

The name Winnie Mandela has been on the lips of most people, in South Africa and the world. Winnie Mandela, the politician, the mother, the woman, tells *SPEAK* about her life.

Winnie Mandela is a woman whose life has been so much a part of the many-coloured threads that make up South Africa's history.

As a political figure for over 30 years, she knew only abuse and suffering under apartheid. She was first arrested in the famous women's anti-pass protests in 1958. For years Mandela experienced constant arrests, detentions, house-arrests and bannings. Possibly the most painful experience of all was her eight-year banishment to Brandfort in 1977.

She married Nelson Mandela in 1958, but their marriage was one of separation and loss. First because her husband was forced to go underground. Then he was arrested in 1962 and imprisoned for many years. More recently, they made public their decision to separate.

Politics has shaped and influenced everything important to Mandela. Her statement that, "A life with him had always been a life without him," seems

By Gail Reagon

to explain her entire life.

Because Mandela is such a larger-than-life figure, I am nervous to interview her. She is older and has experienced so much and I am not sure how she will treat me as a journalist.

Today, on a clear and crisp Cape Town morning, she looks lovely dressed in the loose, vibrant African clothing that suits her so well. Later in the interview she confesses that most of her wardrobe consists of gifts from friends, especially from Central Africa.

Yet beauty and fashion are far from the mind of the new Deputy Minister of Arts and Culture, Science and Technology.

"I never discuss my personal appearance. It's of no importance at all. What is important is that I'm a woman, a mother, and, above all, a social worker."

She laughs before continuing that she is also a grandmother: "I have eight grandchildren

between my two daughters and with my stepchildren's, we have altogether about 18 amongst the whole clan."

In this description of herself and the roles she plays, Mandela does not use words like "feminism" or "gender". It is as if her life has gone beyond such categories.

What is obvious is that she continues to stand as a symbol for all women who are serious about justice and change in their lives. Her strength, her outspokenness, her militancy, her style ... all these qualities are inspirational.

Throughout the interview, which ranges from funny and warm to very sad, there are two qualities that stand out about this woman.

The first, for Mandela, the woman, there is no separation between the personal and the political.

She responds to personal questions in a political way. Does she like dancing? What are her favourite colours? How does she relax?

Yes, she loved dancing as a child, "that's why I toyi-toyed so much in my adult life. I enjoyed myself so much at rallies. I was always in front, toyi-toying."

Her favourite colour is green, one of the "national colours". But she adds: "If I had led a normal life, a life where I could enjoy myself like normal people in a normal society, I probably would have paid more attention to colours."

"I have never had time for leisure. Relaxation could perhaps come one day, after five years, when the government has taken off."

There is a sense of great sadness underlying Mandela's replies. What would she have done if her life had not been shaped by politics?

"It's very hard for any black South African to imagine a life without apartheid. All our lives have

been shaped by the political situation in the country.

"As mothers, each home in apartheid South Africa was a political institution. There were apartheid prisons, but South Africa was a bigger prison for all of us, black and white, tragically."

"If you've been involved and in the forefront of the struggle, you don't think in terms of being an individual. If that had been my approach to life I would have thrown in the towel long ago.

"I cannot pretend it does not

hurt, I cannot pretend that it is easy to forget. I don't think it will ever be possible to forget the brutality of apartheid, but I will not allow that to influence my position in government.

"If one did that, one would be so consumed by your hurt and your personal feelings that it would not be possible to be part of this great moment in history."

Her commitment to the new government is filled with regret that the lives of so many children were sacrificed during the "uphill road" towards a democratic, non-racial country.

"My biggest regret is that so

but also because Mandela was convicted for her part in Stompie's kidnapping. In her first speech in parliament recently she expressed regret for having "failed" Stompie.

I asked her about the case and her reply was firm and consistent with her often expressed views that the apartheid government had put her on trial in every possible way: "I was convicted because I took youths under my wing. I was saving them, they were actually brought to me — and that is still the case today."

"I feel absolutely nothing about a conviction by an apartheid court. I have never

really been the target, the target has been the ANC and, above all, the president of the ANC.

"That is why the Stompie affair surfaces every time there is some major political event in the country."

The second

quality that strikes one about Mandela is her commitment to making sure the ANC Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) is implemented in ways that will change the lives of ordinary South Africans.

The passion which drove her as a grassroots activist still drives her as a high-profile government deputy minister.

"Having been forcibly removed from Johannesburg to Brandfort made me understand

continued on page 14



Photo: William Matlala

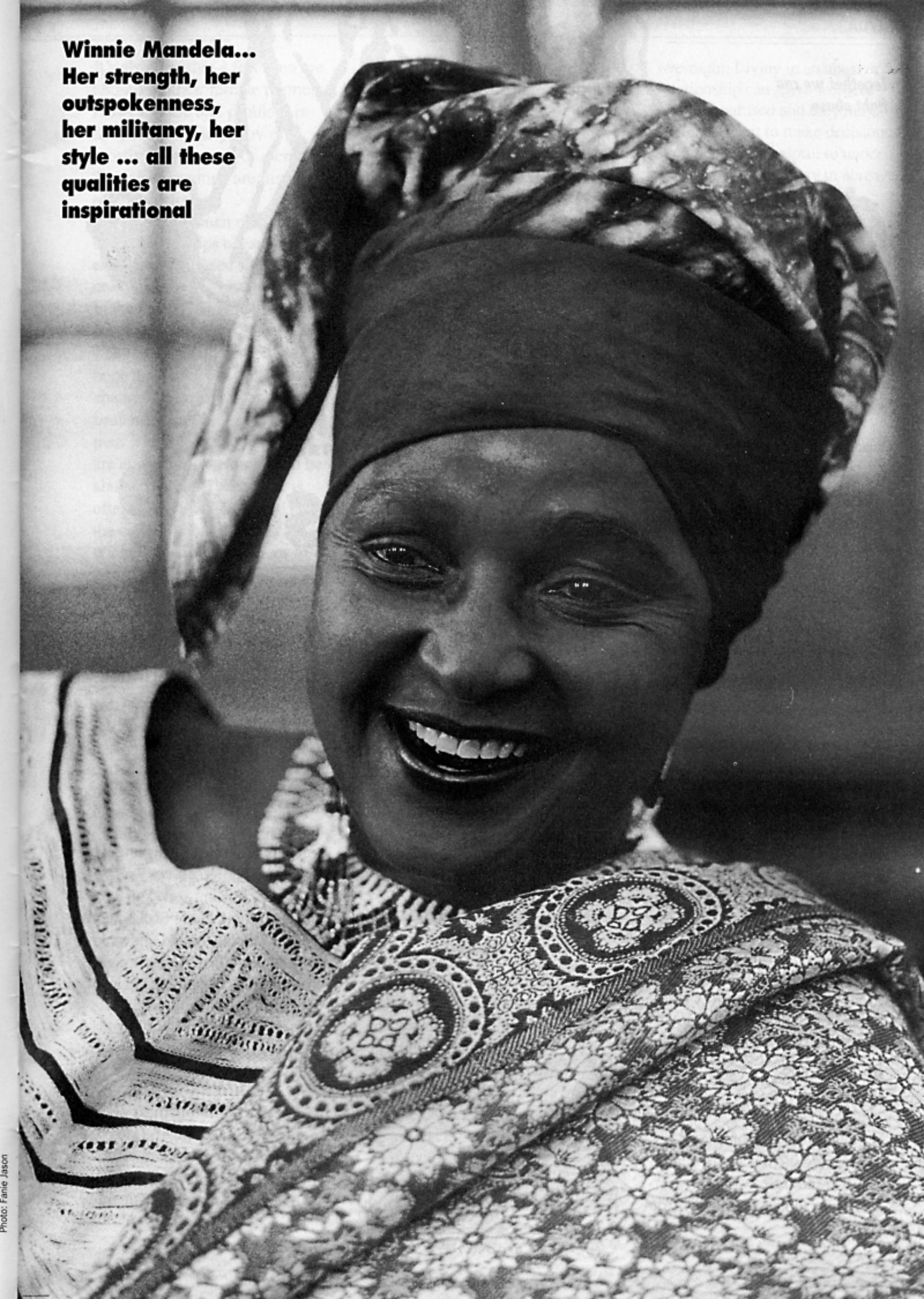
'I would not be able to stand seeing rural women, who have borne the brunt of oppression, still without water, health facilities and decent roads.'

many mothers have experienced the anguish of losing their children.

"What can you do to repair the hurt of a mother in Phola Park whose sleeping child is shot? How do you forget and how do we heal those wounds?"

Many would, on hearing the grief in her voice, wonder how she feels about Joyce Seipei, the Tumahole mother who lost her son, Stompie Seipei. Child activist Stompie Seipei's death in 1988 made world headlines, not only because of his youth,

**Winnie Mandela...
Her strength, her
outspokenness,
her militancy, her
style ... all these
qualities are
inspirational**



*Together we can
fight abuse*



Are you abused?

What is abuse?

Your partner can abuse you in different ways. One of them is trying to control you and your life.

You are being abused in your relationship if any of the following things are happening to you:

Physical and sexual violence

- Slapping, punching, kicking or hitting. You might end up in hospital or die as a result of injuries.
- If your partner rapes you or forces you to have sex with others.

Psychological (mental) abuse

- You are often told you are stupid and worthless. Nothing you do is right.
- Your partner is jealous and possessive. He often accuses you of being unfaithful.
- He tries to keep you away from

At least 65 out of every 100 women in South Africa are abused by their partners at least once in their life, according to the Human Sciences Research Council. Many do not even realise they are in an abusive relationship. Here is what to look out for...

family and friends.

- He often shouts and swears at you.
- Living with your partner is terrifying. You never know when he's going to explode.

Financial and material abuse

- He takes your money. Perhaps he also steals your clothes and possessions and sells them.
- He spends most of the money on himself and only gives you a little bit of money for the family.
- He expects you to explain how you spend every cent. He expects you to stretch the money further than it can possibly go.
- Your partner refuses to tell you

how much money he earns or what he does with it.

If any of this is happening to you, you are probably asking why. It may be hard to accept your partner is abusing you. You may be using some of the explanations given below to try and understand the situation. Perhaps your partner even offers these reasons to justify his behaviour.

Common things people say about abuse

- They say both partners are equally to blame for the violence in their relationship. It's true that some women hit back in anger or in self-defence.

It's also true that a few men are abused by their female partners. However, the real problem is that, in our society, power is mostly in the hands of men. Therefore, women are most often the victims.

● **They say women choose abusive relationships because they enjoy being abused or they are crazy.**

In the first place, women choose partners who claim to love them. They excuse the abuse in the hope that their partners will change. Too many women are beaten for us to believe that only men with a certain personality are abusers. Any woman can be abused. "Crazy" behaviour is often because of abuse and not the cause of it.

● **They say abuse happens in poor families where there is a lack of education.**

Research has shown that abusers come from all walks of life and backgrounds.

● **They say alcohol and drugs cause abusive behaviour.**

Alcohol and drugs make the situation worse, but they do not cause abuse. A man who abuses a woman may also do this when he is sober. Men who do not drink or take drugs also abuse their partners.

● **They say his childhood made him this way.**

Childhood trauma does create misery. Abused children do not necessarily grow up to abuse others. Abusive behaviour is chosen because the abuser has learnt it will ensure that he gets his way.

● **They say once a woman has been abused she will always be abused.**

An abused woman loses her confidence and self-esteem (sense of worth). However, many women who have been

abused and worked through these feelings, are able to have healthy relationships with men who don't abuse them.

Signs of abuse

You may be worried that a friend or family member is being abused. If most of these signs are there, you may be right.

- Does the person repeatedly have bruises, broken bones or other injuries, but says they are because of "falls" or "accidents"?
- Are the children frightened of their father? Wife abuse can go alongside child abuse.
- Does she often complain of being afraid, anxious or depressed? Does she seem unusually withdrawn or quiet?
- Is she often late or absent from work? Does she often have to leave work or social gatherings early to get back to her partner?
- Have you ever felt frightened of her partner? Does he criticise her in front of you?
- Has she ever worn long-sleeved or high-necked tops in warm weather?
- Does she sometimes wear heavy make-up, sun glasses, hats or scarves when it is not necessary to do so?

What can you do to help?

- If you are helping someone who is in an abusive relationship, go through all the things listed above.
- Give her time to make changes. It doesn't happen

**See notice board
(inside back cover)
for addresses of
organisations which
can help abused
women**

overnight. Living in an abusive relationship can leave women feeling confused and they may find it difficult to make decisions. It could also be helpful to understand why women stay in abusive relationships.

Why do women stay in abusive relationships?

Many women feel a sense of duty in their relationships. They feel that:

- Marriage vows are sacred;
- A good wife stands by her man;
- It's her responsibility to make the relationship work.

Women also live in fear because:

- The batterer threatens to kill her;
- She's afraid that he will track her down wherever she goes;
- He threatens suicide if she leaves.

An abused woman often lacks confidence because:

- She may have come to believe she cannot make it on her own.

An abused woman may live with hope because:

- She may still love her partner;
- She believes there is still the possibility her partner will change.

There are many practical problems which may stop an abused woman from leaving her partner. These include:

- Economic dependence on her partner;
- Accommodation is scarce and expensive;
- Concern for her children.

If a woman chooses to confide in you, listen to what she has to say and believe her. Tell her you care about her and her safety. Take her fears seriously. Tell her where to find help and give her support. ✪

● This article is adapted from an information pamphlet produced by People Opposing Women Abuse (POWA) in Johannesburg.

South Africa has a new interim constitution with a new bill of rights. This constitution is an historic bridge between an unjust past and a democratic future.

Yet many people do not know what it says and does, or how it can empower them to participate in the reconstruction of our democratic society.

This is the first in a series of articles which try to make the constitution more user-friendly. By Cathi Albertyn

Know your constitution

What is a constitution

A constitution is a law that describes what the government is and how it works. It is the most important law of the land. It tells us how a government is elected, what powers it has, and how these powers are divided between national and regional governments. It also tells us how laws are made.

A constitution also sets out the principles on how the country should be governed, as well as the rights of citizens. Many of these rights and principles are found in the bill of rights which is part of the constitution.

Why an interim constitution?

The new South African constitution is not a final constitution. It is an interim constitution that sets up a Government of National Unity for a period of five years. This means that the



Negotiations over the interim constitution. Not only politicians should know the constitution

ANC, the winning party in the April 1994 election, shares power with those political parties who received at least five percent of the vote. These political parties are entitled to participate in the cabinet and are expected to support government policy.

During this interim period of five years, the new Parliament will act for some of its time as a Constitutional Assembly and will draw up the constitution. This must be done within two years. At the end of five years, the period of power-sharing is over and the next general election will take place under the final constitution.

The South African Interim Constitution created our first democratic government.

How parliament is elected

All South African citizens who are 18 years and older may vote

Cabinet ministers are accountable to parliament. It is an unwritten rule that if a cabinet minister fails in her or his duties and responsibilities, she or he must resign. However, this does not happen unless there is enough public pressure.

for the new Parliament. The results of this election determine how many Members of Parliament (MPs) each party has. Parliament is the institution that makes the law of the land. It is called the legislature.

Because it is your vote that elects your party to parliament, both your party and its MPs are accountable to you. This means you can lobby your MP to support your interest.

Choosing a President

The constitution says that Parliament must elect the President.

In practice, it means that the President is a member of the majority party in parliament. The President is the head of state and has many powers, including the appointment of ministers who make up the cabinet.

The President and the ministers make up the cabinet and are called the executive.

How the cabinet works

The cabinet is a very powerful body. It meets every week to decide on government policy. Each minister is in charge of a particular portfolio, such as health; defence; justice; housing and labour. Each minister has a government department and is responsible for its policy and activities.

Cabinet ministers are accountable to parliament. It is an unwritten rule that if a cabinet minister fails in her or his duties and responsibilities, she or he must resign. However, this does not happen unless there is enough public pressure.

The courts

The constitution establishes the

courts which enforce the laws. It also tells us how judges should be appointed. One of the most important courts is the Constitutional Court which we will discuss in the next article.

Regional governments

The Constitution says there will be a regional government in each of the nine provinces. These have the power to make policy and laws for their provinces on matters such as agriculture, education, health, housing, police, transport, roads, development and welfare.

The members of the regional parliament were elected by your second vote in the April 1994 election. Each regional government is headed by a Premier who chooses a regional cabinet.

Regional governments will be making laws on many matters that affect your daily lives.

Many regional governments, such as that in the PWV, are trying to find ways of including their communities in the process of decision-making. It is important that you find out how your regional government intends to do this.

In order for this government to deliver and remain a government of the people, it is important for everyone to get involved. ☼

In the next issue we will look at the Bill of Rights, the Constitutional Courts and the Human Rights Commission.

● *Cathi Albertyn is a researcher at the Centre for Applied Legal Studies (CALS), University of the Witwatersrand. CALS does not respond to queries by individuals. However, it organises workshops for groups on the constitution. For more information, telephone: (011) 403 6918*

The Zibonele Health Project lies in the crowded and dusty Griffiths extension in Khayelitsha, Cape Town. The health centre could pass for one of the tiny houses around it, were it not for its big aerial and Shawco truck outside it.

For the past three years, this modest building has been a community health clinic serving about 20 000 people who live in Griffith and surrounding areas. But, in the past 18 months, Zibonele Health Project has become more than just a health centre. The project now houses one of the most successful community radio stations in the country — Radio Zibonele. Minor changes have been made to accommodate equipment for the radio station.

In a cupboard below the bed where



Radio with a difference

Community radio stations are springing up everywhere. Radio Zibonele in Khayelitsha is different. It is run mainly by women.

Gail Reagon visited the station

patients are examined, you won't find medical equipment. Instead, there is a transmitter and battery used to run the community's very own radio station.

"We used to broadcast every Tuesday, from 9am to 11.40am, but stopped at the end of March because we didn't have a license," Radio Zibonele's Snowy Mocha explains.

"We applied for a temporary broadcasting license and the community signed a petition in support of our application."

The radio station was born from the vision of commu-

nity health care. The aim was that it should focus on education about how to prevent illness.

The project employs 15 people, most of them women. Each one does at least 125 home visits a month to educate and inform people about health issues.

"With radio," said Miriam Hlazo, "we are able to do a lot more education work around health. We can reach more people".

"Members of the community also use the radio to broadcast messages about meetings and community events," added Portia Ngondeka.

The setting up of the station was supported by the National Progressive Primary Health Care Network's (NPPHC) Media and Training Centre.

Health workers at the community health centre in Khayelitsha run Radio Zibonele



Initially, four women health workers were trained by Bush Radio in Cape Town. They still attend regular training sessions to improve their broadcasting skills. "Each and every health worker at the project participates in Radio Zibonele," said Thandi Zabungcu.

When Zibonele Radio Project suspended its operations in March, it was already a well-established community radio station.

Besides dealing with health issues, Radio Zibonele also offers advice and covers social issues ranging from how to raise funds, to advertising community meetings. "The only area we did not cover was politics," said Ngondeka.

All programmes are broadcast in Xhosa, the local language.

Radio Zibonele is an example of people taking control of their lives. Through the health and radio projects, the people of Khayelitsha, especially women, have been empowered.

Radio Zibonele's application for a license has received a lot

Radio Zibonele presenter Thandi Zabungcu interviewing a Khayelitsha resident. "Before, we thought that, as women, we couldn't do anything without men. Now that we are in this great project, we are powerful and the community encourages us,

of support. In July, three members of the Independent Broadcasting Authority (IBA) visited Zibonele and "were impressed with what we are doing", said Mocha proudly.

The IBA is a body which issues radio licenses to community and other radio stations.

"We told them we needed a permanent licence because we want to broadcast every day from 9 am to 4 pm. We want to develop our community. They promised us that we would know by the end of August".

But, like their name, Zibonele — "We see for ourselves" — these are not people who sit around waiting for things to happen.

At the time of the interview, they were busy working on pro-

grammes which will go on air as soon as the license is issued.

And, because community involvement does not stop with adults, Radio Zibonele is teaching children how to broadcast. Three months ago, the "Child to Child" project was launched. Children aged between six and 14 years were trained in broadcasting during a week-long workshop run by staff members, SPEAK's Radio Audio Programme (RAP) executive producer Libby Lloyd and Dr Gabriel Urgoiti from the Media and Training Centre.

"The children were great. They kept on saying, 'we want to make an interview. We want to make our own songs'," Mocha said.

Programmes produced by the children were recorded and will be broadcast to the community as soon as Radio Zibonele gets its license.

Radio Zibonele is the envy of many communities. And so are the people who run it. Mocha, Hlazo, Ngondeka and Zabungcu — young independent mothers, health workers and radio producers and presenters — are proud to be part of this community effort.

Among them they have seven children. Three are single parents. Besides broadcasting, all of them are community health workers.

It is even more encouraging that the community supports the project.

"Before, we thought that as women we couldn't do anything without men. Now that we are in this great project, we are powerful and the community encourages us," said Zabungcu. ♣



Photo: Fanie Jason

continued from page 6

the pain of removal, the pain of homelessness.”

Her hopes for the future are as basic and fundamental as the people to whom she has always pledged her loyalty.

“I would not be able to stand seeing rural women, who have borne the brunt of oppression, still without water, health facilities and decent roads.

“Or that hostel dwellers, men who were treated like animals, living in conditions so humiliating that they forgot they are human beings, should continue that way.”

Though committed to the Government of National Unity, Mandela is not shy to speak out — in her blunt and militant way — about difficulties over the next five years.

“Any government that takes over a country like ours will nat-

urally run an uphill road. We have had to accommodate people and parties whose policies are totally different.”

She expresses similar ideas about her role and vision as Deputy Minister of Arts and Culture, Science and Technology.

“We are forming a brand new ministry. It still only exists on paper. The ANC has had to formulate policy as opposed to the previous policy of a government which had totally disregarded arts, culture, science and technology for blacks.

“Most of these institutions are still lily-white and they are in control. What we tried to do was to draw up policies that would address these imbalances. We have to Africanise the whole institution.

“Our people should be appointed and trained. The RDP is about empowerment and those who hold the knowledge should

share it with our people!”

Besides insisting that the staff and focus of the department should change, Mandela also believes that government should not interfere in the world of arts and culture.

“Arts and culture are areas that are sacred, a world the government should not even touch. I don’t think you can lay down rules for a person to express her or his inner self. That belongs to the individual. What should be encouraged is open freedom of expression.”

It is clear that, for Mandela, real change lies in the successful implementation of the RDP which should result in “empowerment” and “total democracy”.

And, if along the way, she stumbles, the “indestructible” Mandela spirit that saw her survive apartheid and political embarrassment, will see her celebrate a country which puts its most ordinary people first. ★

We will miss you

Women's rights activist and African National Congress Member of Parliament, Feroza Adam, died tragically after a car crash in August this year. Many of her close friends, comrades and colleagues she worked with will remember her for her outspokenness, hard work and dedication to gender equality.

She did not take kindly to men and women who behaved in a sexist way. A story is told of how she grabbed a male colleague by his tie, dragged him into the corridor and kicked him very hard. His crime — he kept staring at her breasts which showed from a low-cut top she was wearing. Adam told him: "Now if anyone asks me why I did this to you, I will tell them that you could not keep your eyes off my breasts and I did not like it."

This is how strongly she felt about a woman's right to run her own life.

She was only 33 when she died but she managed to pack a lot into those years.

Adam became involved in politics while still at school at Nirvana High School in Lenasia. She obtained a BA degree and teacher's diploma at the University of the Witwatersrand.

She was active in student politics on campus. She

taught for five years at schools in Bosmont, Lenasia and Observatory. Many of her former students speak affectionately of how she treated them with equality and respect.

She was also involved with the Transvaal Indian Congress and the United Democratic Front.

In 1988 Adam became a full-time coordinator for the United Democratic Front. After the ANC was unbanned in 1990, she went to work for its PWV regional office and later at its head office.

Adam was dedicated to the women's struggle for equal rights. She was publicity secretary for the Federation of Transvaal Women (Fedtraw) from 1984 and the PWV ANC's Women's League in 1992.

She worked tirelessly to build the Women's National Coalition.

This year, she joined her comrades in parliament. At the same time, she had the difficult task of running President Nelson Mandela's



Photo compliments Anne Vincent

publicity programme.

Her death came as a shock to all who knew her. Her friends knew Adam as a dynamic person who lived life to the fullest and devoted all her energy to whatever task she performed.

Hamba Kahle ★

Win a wonderful camera

You can be the lucky winner of a wonderful camera. All you have to do is answer the question below and send your correct entry to SPEAK magazine.

When did Feroza Adam become a Member of Parliament (MP)?

Answer

Competition rules: The decision of the judges is final. This competition is only open to people living in South Africa. Employees and relatives of employees of SPEAK are not allowed to enter. The closing date is 15 October 1994. The winners will be announced in SPEAK.

Name

Address

.....

.....

.....

.....Code

Send your entry to:
SPEAK CAMERA COMPETITION
 PO Box 556
 Johannesburg 2000

WOMEN OF

Looking back on the United

Nine years ago, women from all over the world came together in Nairobi. The reason: to highlight the plight of the women all over the world and to look at common ways of tackling the issues.

Women left the conference with one voice — 1985 to 1995 would be the United Nations Decade of Women. This decade would witness a growth in women's organisations and movements and progressive government policies about women.

The Fourth United Nations World Conference on Women which will take place in Beijing in September next year. It will look at the gains women have made and the way forward.

But why should women in South Africa get involved in the Beijing Conference?

It is important that South African women participate in this conference, and in the events and processes leading up to it. This is where important decision concerning women all over the world will be taken.

It is here that people meet and plan on issues that are relevant to the rights and development of women around the world. These events are also a way of celebrating women's achievements.

Before, the few South African women who attended world conferences usually came

Women all over the world, from the hot tip of Africa to the cold snow tipped mountains of Iceland, are getting ready for the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, China in 1995.

By Rosalee Telela

from a small sector in our society. We have never enjoyed formal government status. This time, women will be going as NGO's, individuals, corporations and officials from government — which is now part of the United Nations.

The preparation period for women here is not only a time to look seriously at the conditions women live under and put them on the agenda, but also a time for serious debate and change.

South African women have already begun preparations and are walking the road to Beijing.

In February this year a conference was held in Johannesburg for NGO preparations for Beijing. "Equality, development, peace" was the main theme of the conference. Other issues discussed included health, education, employment and youth.

Participants at the conference came from a various organisations. These included the ANC, PAC, Women's Development Foundation, Women's Health Project, IFP, Rural Women's

Movement, Azapo and SPEAK Magazine, amongst others.

The following are areas that NGO's feel should be addressed by the Platform of Action to be adopted at the Beijing Conference (as suggested by the National NGO Planning Committee):

- The persistent and growing burden of poverty on women;
- Inequality in access to education, health, and related services and the means of maximising the use of women's capacities;
- Health;
- Violence against women;
- Effects of armed and other kinds of conflict on women;
- Inequality in women's access to and participation in the definition of economic structures and policies and the productive process itself;
- Inequality between men and women in the sharing of power and decision making at all levels;
- Insufficient mechanisms at all levels to promote the advancement of women;

THE WORLD

Nations Decade of women



Beijing face a big challenge — coming back to South Africa and making sure resolutions passed at the conference are implemented. But before women here take that long journey to Beijing, they should face the challenge of bringing together all women, not just activists and parliamentarians. If the processes leading up to Beijing do not reflect and take into account the diversity which exists among women in South

Africa, then the very conditions of women that need to be changed will remain the same — known only to the people who live under them.

Other preparations by NGO's include fundraising which is mainly conducted the Secretariat to the National Planning Committee set up at the conference in February. These funds are being raised for a national workshop and regional workshops. Some money will also be raised for research to plan for programmes in the following areas, identified at the

NGO conference in February: Equality, development, peace, health, education and employment.

Time and energy will be given to programmes aimed at empowering disabled women and young women — two groups which are often left out when women organise.

NGO's preparations also aim to empower women in communities that lack resources such as rural women, squatter communities, domestic workers.

Meetings are also being held with a wide range of women's groups — religious, NGO's, development, social, feminist and so on. These meetings provide space for women to inform each other about issues and procedures regarding the conference.

This is our first opportunity to be fully represented in an international conference. We must take up the challenge and, more importantly, we must remember that the interests of all women in South Africa, and the world, must come first. ★

If you want to know more about the Beijing Conference, write to:
The NGO Secretariat for Dakar/Beijing
PO Box 62319
Marshalltown 2107
Telephone: (011) 331 1125/6
Fag: (011) 331 2363

- Lack of awareness of and commitment to nationally and internationally recognise women's human rights;
- Insufficient use of mass media to promote women's positive contributions to society;
- Lack of adequate recognition and support for women's natural resources and safeguarding the environment.

It is time to stop talking and start working towards ensuring women's equality and development. But this can only be done if there is peace and tolerance. Women who will be going to



Photo: Henner Frankenfeld

Women street vendors have a hard time trying to make ends meet. Now they have a union to fight for their rights

Making life work for women

Women traders in Natal now have a home where they can fight the exploitation and abuse of the streets. Three months ago, a union was formed to look into their needs

Beauty Mahlaba (41) is a survivor. Born into a life of poverty, she battled her way through life. She was a domestic worker, until her employer fired her two years ago. The reason? She failed to brave a violent day in Durban's Umlazi township to go to work.

Mahlaba could not find another job. But she knew she had skills that could help her support her family. Together with other women in her shack

resettlement, Mahlaba formed a dressmaking co-operative. Business was good until a fresh wave of violence sent most of the women fleeing their homes — and their co-operative.

However, this did not discourage Mahlaba. She soon reopened the co-operative in the mainly white business district of Umbilo. The new co-operative failed to get customers.

Mahlaba then approached Durban's newly formed Self-

Employed Women's Union (Sewu) for help.

Launched three months ago, Sewu now has almost 300 members, most of them self-employed beachfront vendors, muti sellers and home-based workers.

This is the first union to bring together self-employed women, who for years have been exploited by those they worked for. They were harassed by police for selling on the streets. They were not recognised as part of the informal sector and often suffered abuse at the hands of criminals.

Things are looking up since Sewu was born. The union has already successfully negotiated for a market site near the Snake Park



Women hawkers in Durban sleep on the street at night. This is the most dangerous time for them. They risk being attacked, robbed or raped

Photo: Cedric Nunn

and Golden Mile beachfront.

Unfortunately, the women's problems are far from over. Although they are happy with the union's progress so far, Mahlaba says they face great risks selling their goods, especially at night. This is the most dangerous time for the hundreds of women who form the backbone of Durban's informal economy.

Mankito Ngcobo (49) knows about these risks. A veteran of the informal sector business, she has been a beachfront craft vendor since she was 11. Ngcobo, together with two other women, were allegedly assaulted by a tourist on the beach front, leaving her with a blue eye.

"The women accept this type of humiliation because they are afraid they will lose their livelihood," says Pat Horn, founder member and secretary of Sewu.

Many poor rural women from the Transkei and Kwa-Zulu/Natal leave their families behind to work on Durban's pavements every year. They risk being attacked, robbed or raped.

But, because there is no other way to survive, they have to fight on.

As president of Sewu, Ngcobo now knows she has the right to protection under the law. Her first step was to file charges

against the tourist who assaulted her. She also persuaded the other two women to do the same.

Through Sewu, the women plan to take back the night — by claiming their rights, through their strength in numbers.

As Pat Horn points out: "Individuals cannot resist, but as a group, they can be empowered. The women think they have no rights. When you talk to some of them about rights, they laugh."

The women are organising themselves. They recently elected a "trade committee" which attends to every member's problems and reports back at meetings. Although rape, assault and protection from thugs are high on the agenda, the union also aims to improve other conditions under which the women work. Most of the members live in single-sex hostels or sleep on the streets, where they take turns to guard their goods throughout the night. They also have to deal with self-styled "pavement lords" who demand high rents for public space. Rain often destroys their goods because there is no shelter. And mothers struggle to protect their children from the street life.

A lack of basic facilities has made life very difficult for the women. Sewu is their only hope.

Muti seller Zodwa Khumalo

(50) has survived the worst and is even more determined to continue now that she is a member of Sewu.

"Let the women be on their own. We want them to learn not to be afraid when men speak," said Khumalo, Sewu's vice-president. She speaks with enthusiasm about the new market the city council is considering building for informal traders.

"We will have toilets and shelter for our goods, maybe even a creche for our children. But the market must be at a good spot where our customers will come — near the taxi ranks and train stations. Otherwise, we will get no business," says Khumalo.

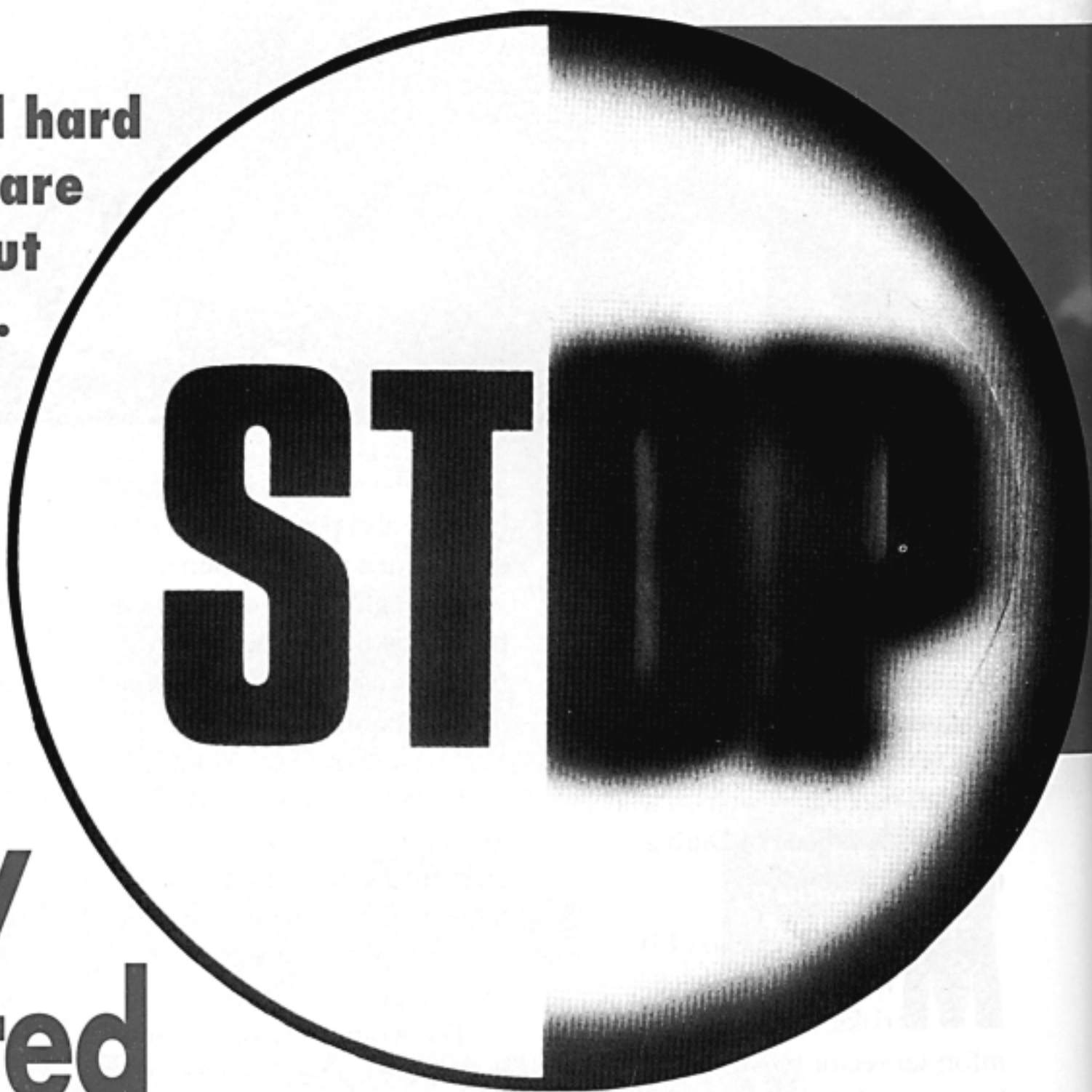
Horn says Sewu's challenge is "to address the structural problems and get the women to go into non-traditional areas like carpentry and electrification".

Sewu is negotiating with the Khuphuka Skills Training and Employment Project to run part-time classes for Sewu members.

"Most of the women are eager to learn such non-traditional skills in order to obtain employment in the Reconstruction and Development Programme's (RDP) building and electrification programmes," says Horn. ★

It does not need hard work to take care of your eyes. But it's worth it. SPEAK offers some advice on how to do it

How to stay sighted



Imagine not being able to read this article. Imagine what it would be like if you had to live in complete darkness all your life.

Most of us take the gift of sight for granted and do not realise the need to look after our eyes. Many blind people would pay any price to be able to see.

There are 370 000 blind people in South Africa. Most of them were not born blind. For half of them, blindness could have been prevented.

The Bureau of the Prevention of Blindness says between 50 and 75 percent of all blindness in the world could be prevented if simple eye care is followed.

What causes blindness?

● The biggest cause of blindness is cataracts.

The lens is a part of the eye which help you see clearly. When the lens becomes unclear and cloudy, a condition called cataract has developed. Cataracts, in most cases, start when a person gets older.

Babies whose mothers have suffered from German measles during the first three months of their pregnancy can get cataracts. People suffering from diabetes also often get cataracts.

There is still no medical cure for cataracts and the only treatment available is to remove the lens from the eye.

- Blindness can also be caused by severe muscular problems, trauma and retinitis pigmentosa.
- Many causes of blindness are hereditary (passed on from one generation to the other) and very little can be done about it.
- Many people in South Africa have lost their sight because of violence (in the home, political, and in the community).

The things that harm your eyes

● The sun

Bright sun rays, particularly in summer, are dangerous to your eyes.

You have to protect your eyes from these rays by staying indoors or wearing sun glasses

Useful hints on eye care

- Use eye drops that are prescribed by a doctor;
- Eye drops or ointment should not be shared;
- Do not use any eye drops/ointment which have become discoloured or cloudy;
- Medicine or treatment that has been open for more than 30 days should not be used;
- Report any unusual reaction of the eye after using eye drops;
- Go for an eye test every year even if you do not have any problems with your eyes;
- Visit a doctor or clinic if there is any discharge from the eyes;
- See a doctor immediately for any eye injury. Any object which goes into the eye must be removed by a doctor;
- Always wear protective goggles when working with dangerous equipment (for example, saws, a welding machine);
- Always wear dark glasses to protect your eyes from the glare and ultraviolet sun rays.

whenever you go out into the sunlight. Sunglasses are to protect your eyes against bright sunlight. Poorly made glasses will not damage your eyes, but may put more strain on your eyes. This can result in squinting, blinking, crying, headaches, nausea and even dizziness.

Sunglasses which block ultraviolet rays (sunburn) should be worn.

● Watching TV

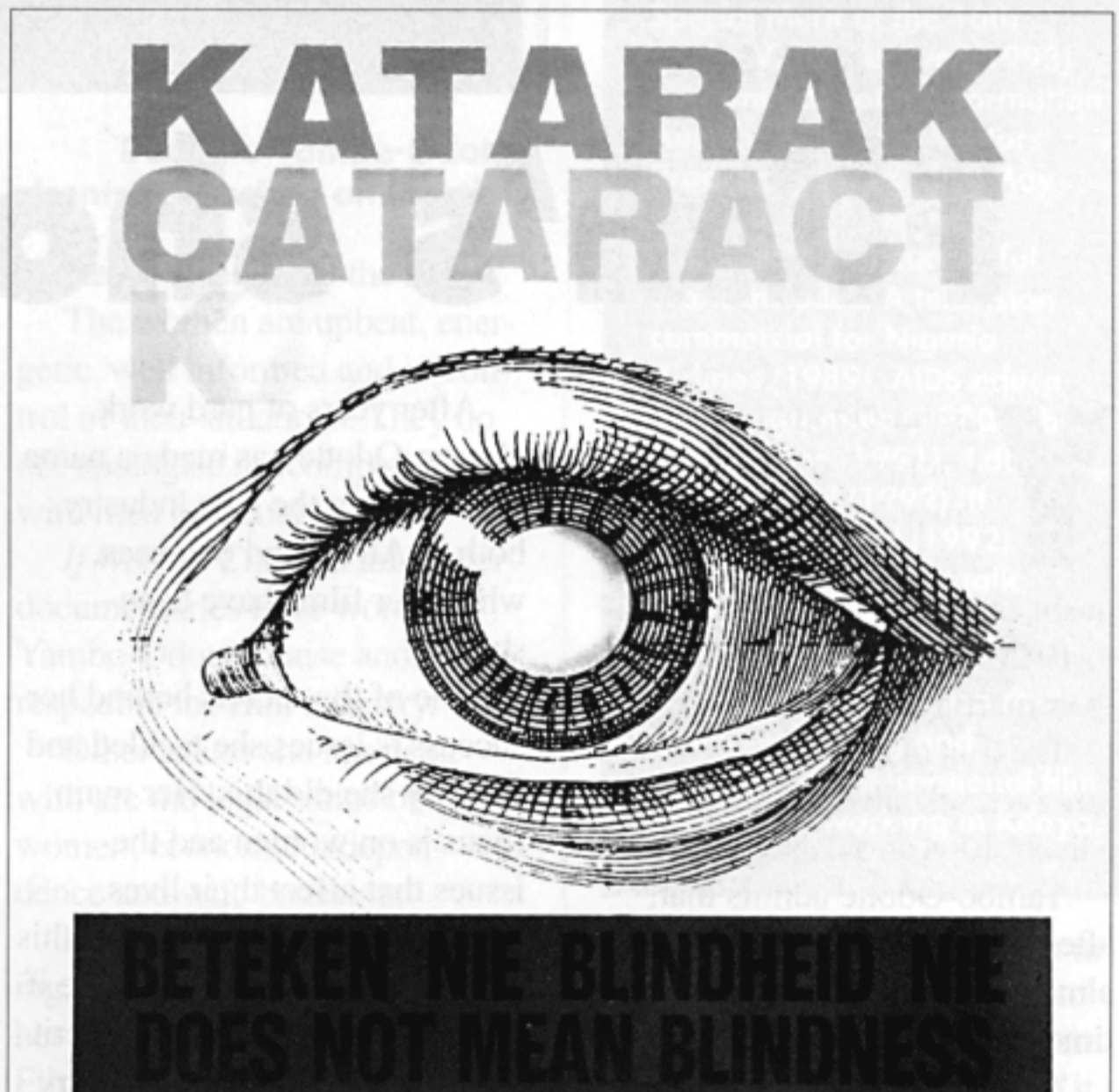
Watching television for a long time is not good for your eyes.

If you are watching from too close or from an awkward angle, it will affect your eyes. The lights should be on if you watching television at night.

● Working on computers

Video and computer use causes severe eye strain. Headaches, unclear vision, watery or itchy eyes are some of the symptoms.

Even if you think you have perfect vision, working on a computer or watching a video for a long time will affect your eyesight. It will make a minor



eyesight problem get worse.

Remember

Eyes are very sensitive, even under the best conditions. It is very important to have your eyes checked regularly. These exami-

nations can also show if you have high blood pressure, diabetes and other disorders, even before their symptoms show.

If you can, visit an eye specialist or clinic as soon as you feel the strain on your eyes. ☆

Dommie Yambo-Odotte, a leading Kenyan filmmaker, has proved her critics wrong by becoming one of the best directors and producers in the industry. She had to work really hard to achieve this. This is her story.

Pic compliments Dommie Yambo-Odotte



Film's shooting

Yambo-Odotte had a brief and what she calls "nice" marriage, but then tragedy struck. Her husband died in a road accident in 1985, hardly two years after their marriage.

The fruit of that marriage is, however, still alive and kicking — a lively 10-year-old daughter Ziki.

Yambo-Odotte admits that, after losing her husband, she was almost out of her mind for some time.

"It took me quite some time to pull myself together once more," she says.

In her grief, she discovered new energy and determination within herself. In 1988, she left her job and started her own film-making company, Zebralink Communications Limited.

After years of hard work, Yambo-Odotte has made a name for herself in the film industry, both in Africa and overseas, where her films have been shown.

One of the secrets behind her success is issues she tackled and the way she did this. Her main focus is on women and the issues that affect their lives.

After her husband's death, his relatives asked Yambo-Odotte if one of his brothers could inherit her. She made her position very clear. "I couldn't transfer my love to a cousin or brother," says Yambo-Odotte.

She says, however, that it was customary for them to do this and that they did not really expect her to marry her husband's brother.

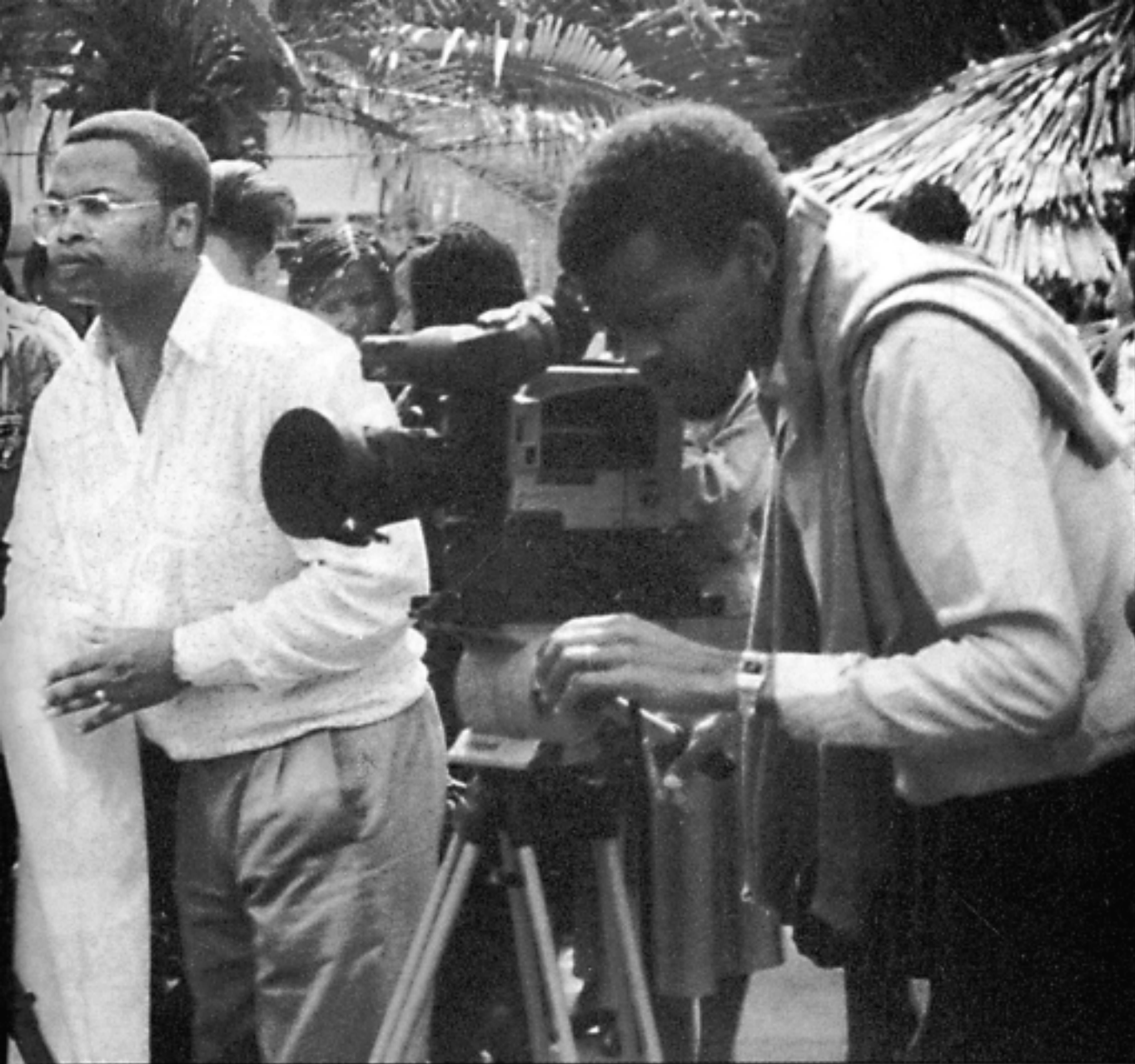
"The issue is not whether it is right or wrong. That is beside the point. It is something which needs to be talked about and agreed on, because "traditions die hard", she says.

This is the type of issue Yambo-Odotte deals with in her films.

She feels strongly that women should have the right to decide what they want. She is convinced that, if a film was made on the effects of the law of inheritance, it would have a great impact on people's lives.

Yambo-Odotte's first successful film was *If Women Counted*, a documentary produced just before Kenya's multi-party elections in 1992.

Her main focus was on the 19 women candidates who were



Dommie Yambo-Odotte (centre) directing on location

star

taking part in the elections. She joined them on their campaign trails, focusing on women's roles in the election process. The film was aimed at exposing and encouraging women's participation in decision making.

It is a powerful and fast-moving film that shows women as bold, powerful and sometimes even daring as they reach out for their rightful position in society.

The film is of historic importance because of its depth in dealing with the way women are always treated. Apart from footage showing the early stages of the elections, it includes shots of mothers of political prisoners being tear-gassed at Freedom Corner in Nairobi. The women's voices

are heard throughout the film.

The women are upbeat, energetic, well informed and in control of their situations. They do not apologise for competing with men on equal terms.

If Women Counted and other documentaries have won Yambo-Odotte praise and respect in the film industry.

Other issues she has dealt with are the legal status of women, economic independence and wife battering.

Her film about wife battering, *Offence like Assault*, won her an award at the 16th Tokyo Film Festival in Japan last year. This was a big achievement, as 1 652 films from 33 countries were entered in the competition.

Yambo-Odotte says the message in this documentary is that wife battering is wrong and both women and men should know that.

About Yambo-Odotte

Born in Nairobi thirty-something years ago, Dommie Yambo-Odotte went to Lwak Girls and Nairobi Girls High Schools. She studied at the Kenya Institute of Mass Communications between 1979 and 1980 before joining the Kenya Institute of Education (KIE). She left KIE in 1986, worked with Filmgate International Production briefly before joining Vista Communications Limited in 1988. She left in June 1988 to set up her own company, Zebralink Communications Ltd.

Yambo-Odotte has won two awards — the Work of Special Merit at the 16th Tokyo Video Festival (1993) and United States Information Agency Voluntary Visitors' Programme award in May this year.

Some of her successful work includes: A television commercial for Nigeria Airlines (1989), AIDS education programme (1990), *The Chosen One* (1991), *Adult in Wonderland* (1992), *If Women Counted* (1992), *An Inside Look* (weekly talk show), and *Towards Autonomy* (1993).

Yambo-Odotte also coordinates filming and research for international film companies working in Kenya.

"Most people do not seem to know that it is wrong and unacceptable. This affects both men and women who normally do it and accept it just because it is a way of living."

Her films are mainly on gender issues which are aimed at encouraging women's empowerment. "It's about time women started believing in themselves fully," she says. ★



Graphic: Z Mashinini

An abuser's sorry

For several years, James abused his wife. Until she left him, he did not think there was anything wrong with his behaviour. James told *SPEAK* his story

I'm a professional in my mid-thirties and live alone. Until two years ago, I lived with my wife and two children. They are no longer with me.

Five years ago, my wife became more successful than me. Although I always thought I was a liberated man and treated women as equals, I could not accept this. I was very jealous and hated her success. She tried very hard to accommodate my fears but I

did not seem to care.

I started treating her badly. I was miserable and had no self confidence. I did not want her to be happy because I wasn't.

I kept telling her she was not giving me what I wanted from the marriage. I kept telling myself I was punishing her for this. At the time, I did not want to admit that I was just jealous of her success.

Once, a few days before our son's birthday, she agreed to organise a party for him. That

week, she had to go on a business trip but promised she would be back in time for his birthday. Well, she forgot to organise the party, and I became very angry.

When she called to apologise, I wouldn't let her speak to the children. I accused her of having an affair and slammed the phone down on her.

I felt satisfied. I had punished her. She deserved to be treated that way.

In my eyes, she became someone who did not know how to be a good wife or mother.

Often when she was away on business trips, I would be very nasty and disrespectful towards her. I would also not let her have any contact with the children.

Sometimes I knew exactly



story

what I was doing, but there were times I abused her without realising it.

Although I usually felt satisfied with myself, there were times when I was disgusted by my behaviour.

I have always been an aggressive person and just wanted things to go my way. This was the problem. She put up with it. Not once did she accuse me of abusing her, or threaten to leave me.

For the first time, two years ago, I hit her hard across the face and ear. I wanted to have my own way, no matter what it cost. But that was not to be. She kicked me in my groin, packed her bags and left — with the children.

I wanted to call her back and beg her to forgive me. But I just let her go... I was left

alone, confused.

I really love her, and if I had been aware of what I was doing to her and our family, I wouldn't have done it. I caused her a lot of pain.

Some men think women enjoy being insulted, beaten and abused all the time. I don't think so. Women don't enjoy being abused. One of my staff members is being abused by her husband. Not long ago, he raped her. But she refuses to leave him.

I can't imagine why my wife did not leave me sooner.

She faced mental and emotional abuse for years. Had she not left, the physical abuse might not have ended with that one slap in the face.

I think I was an abuser partly because my father was abusive towards my mother. He would hit her often and, every time it happened, I swore that I'd never be like him. But I guess his behaviour influenced me. I know I only hit my wife

once, but I abused her for years.

Now, I have no partner and I can't be with my children.

My son blames me for breaking up the family. I miss them so much. All the abuse was not worth losing her and my children. It's like taking a gun and shooting yourself in the foot.

I've changed. One day I came across an advert about the National Institute for Crime Prevention and Rehabilitation of Offenders (Nicro). They give counselling to men who are or have been abusive.

The counselling was the best thing that happened in my life. I learned to be honest about what I had done. I learned to accept that I abused my wife and that I was wrong. I felt ashamed. Some men feel proud when they abuse their partners. They feel, if you do not beat or rape a woman, you are not a man.

I've learned that asking for help is not a sign of weakness. Don't walk away from your problems. Be man enough to face them. If you don't love your partner any more, get out of the relationship. Don't abuse the person.

I think men who have been abusers should speak out. If more men spoke out against abuse, other men would realise it is wrong.

In the end, the satisfaction you feel after you abuse someone is not worth the pain you cause them. It is not worth destroying their lives and your own. ✪

If you want to speak to someone, call Nicro on telephone: (011) 29 5236

No Wo(man)'s Land

Antoinette Letsheleha is like most young college students. She enjoys meeting other students, discussing assignments or the latest music hits. However, unlike other students, she cannot talk about where she goes out to 'jol' or who her real friends are. Letsheleha (23) cannot share the joys and sorrows of her life as a black lesbian.

"There are many black lesbians but we are afraid of 'coming out of the closet' (letting people know) because of people's attitudes," Letsheleha told SPEAK.

When she is among her friends, be it at a party or club, Letsheleha publicly declares her love for other women.

"I'm a lesbian. I'm attracted to other women physically, mentally and emotionally.

"It took me a long time to realise I was a lesbian. Although I found women attractive, I had relationships with men. Then I became sexually involved with both men and women."

Letsheleha strongly believes homosexuality is neither abnormal nor unAfrican.

"People think we have been bewitched or that we have both male and female sexual organs. This is not true. I was not influenced by anyone. I am a lesbian woman, not a S'tabane."

Lesbian and Gay Pride Marches and campaigns are one way in which homosexuals have made their voices heard. There is, however, a price to pay when one is openly lesbian or gay.

Lesbian and gay marches are becoming an October tradition in South Africa. Two women talk about their struggles
By Rosalee Telela



Photo: Elmond Jiyane

Letsheleha says some people have become more homophobic (anti-lesbian and gay).

"They think lesbians are women who want to be men. But I'm not trying to be a man."

The battle for acceptance within society, and more importantly, one's family is a difficult one.

"One day a man approached me telling how much he liked me and that we should go out together. I told him I was a lesbian. He got very angry and swore he and his friends were going to rape all lesbians to make us 'real women'.

"He said we were stealing their girlfriends," Letsheleha laughs nervously.

What hurts most is when your own family does not understand, she says.

"It's terrible, especially if you are close to them. My sister, who is also a lesbian, and I are lucky because both our mother and grandmother have accepted us."

Although lesbians and gays still try to be accepted by their communities, they feel more at home in the company of other homosexuals.

"We have our own groups where we can be comfortable with each other. We can be ourselves without any fear of being insulted and harassed," says Letsheleha.

Lesbians also experience problems similar to those of people in heterosexual (woman and man) relationships. There is joy, love, harassment, abuse, and broken relationships. She spoke of some of the problems.

"You get lesbians who abuse other women and sleep around. Some do it because they want to

Lesbian and Gay organisations

The Association of Bisexual, Gay and Lesbian people (ABIGALE), Cape Town
Telephone: (021) 241 532

The Organisation for Lesbian and Gay Action (OLGA), Cape Town
PO Box 7315 Roggebaai, 8012

Lesbian Forum, Witwatersrand
PO Box 23646, Joubert Park, 2004
Telephone: (011) 939 1190

Gay Advice Bureau (GAB), Witwatersrand
Telephone: (011) 643 2311

The Gay and Lesbian Organisation of the Witwatersrand (GLOW)
Telephone: (011) 614 4040

Gay and Lesbian Organisation of the Cape (GLOC)
PO Box 21470, Port Elizabeth, 6000
Telephone: (041) 522 921

The Natal Gay Community (NGC)
Telephone: (031) 324 561

United Gay Organisation of Namibia (UGON)
PO Box 21429, Windhoek, Namibia.

Sunday's Women, Durban
PO Box 33992, Overport, 4067

be like men."

She blames society for this. "They think if they act in that way, society will accept them."

Megan Pillay, a member of the Gay and Lesbian Organisation of the Witwatersrand (Glow) and the Lesbian Forum says organising is the key to liberation for gays and lesbians.

"Our organisations are there to lobby for gay and lesbian rights. Even though South Africa has a Bill of Rights which protects us, this does not mean our struggle is over."

The Bill of Rights lays down the human and civil rights of every individual. It rules out any form of discrimination on the

grounds of race, gender, ethnic or social origin, colour, sexual orientation, age, disability, religion, conscience, belief, culture or language. This has to be guarded, says Pillay.

"We have to make sure that our rights are not taken away and we also still need to change people's attitudes."

Violence against gay and lesbian people is one of the most serious problems they face. Pillay says Glow is working with the police to address this problem. Many times the police have been accused of harassing gays and lesbians.

Letting the world know one is gay or lesbian, and even admitting it to oneself, is not easy. People often need support. There are organisations which provide counselling and support for gay and lesbian people.

Sexism within gay and lesbian organisations is another big problem.

"Whether we like it or not, we live in a sexist society. Within our organisations, it is gay men who dominate," says Pillay.

She says the Lesbian Forum, which was part of Glow, broke away because of this. Some members of the Lesbian Forum remain members of Glow.

"A lot of lesbians feel more comfortable among each other. We meet to share similar experiences and problems."

Pillay has dreams of developing this further.

"I think we should start doing things we've talked about — writing our stories, making films, looking at lesbian women's health issues. We must make sure our rights as women and lesbians are protected." ★

Answers about AIDS

Blessing: How is the AIDS virus passed on? Does a woman have to have a cut in her vagina to get infected by a man's semen?

SPEAK: During sexual intercourse, the penis is inserted into the vagina which has mucus membrane inside. Intercourse is a process of stimulation by rubbing both the penis and vagina simultaneously.

When this happens, it is likely that there will be minor cuts inside the vagina. The semen which the man ejaculates into the vagina stays there for up to eight hours. This is why there is a good chance that a woman can get infected by a man who is HIV positive.

Thoko: It is a common belief that women spread HIV/AIDS. Is this true? How common is it for a woman to get AIDS from a man? Do condoms really protect one?

SPEAK: Research has shown that it is easier for an infected man to infect a woman than for a woman to give it to a man. This is because sperm remains in the vagina for a long time after sexual intercourse.

A woman can get HIV (the virus which causes AIDS) by either having sex with an infected partner, receiving contaminated blood or using sharp

This is the second in a series of articles that look at concerns people have about HIV and AIDS. SPEAK asked health workers to help answer the questions...



instruments (such as needles or razor blades) which have been used by an infected person.

Condoms — for men and women — protect people from getting HIV.

But this only happens when condoms are used correctly. Before you start using them, discuss with your partner which condoms (male or female) you are going to use. Explore each other's feelings and be open and honest about how you feel. Build trust in the partnership.

Thandi: I will not have sexual intercourse without a condom. But my new boyfriend, Vusi, says he will not settle for anything but 'the real thing'. He says, if I

insist on using condoms, I don't love him. How can I tell him it is dangerous not to use condoms, without hurting his feelings?

SPEAK: This is a difficult situation. Vusi may believe he will not enjoy sex if he uses a condom. You need to discuss this with him and convince him this is not so.

Here are a few suggestions. You and your partner can talk to someone about sex in general and safer sex in particular. You can visit a Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STD) clinic or AIDS service organisation.

Try to get all the information you need to help Vusi understand how important it is to protect oneself. Also try to find out if Vusi is just unaware or if he is

STOP AIDS A



**These pages have
been made possible
by NPPHCN National
AIDS Programme**

The PPHC National AIDS Programme helps communities fight ignorance about AIDS. If you need the support of a community worker or if you have any further questions contact the PPHC National AIDS Programme. The telephone numbers of their offices are:

National office: (011) 403 4647

Eastern Transvaal:

(01315) 41 181

Northern Transvaal:

(01521) 91 4221

Southern Transvaal:

(011) 337 7126

Orange Free State:

(057) 396 5509

Natal: (031) 301 2582

Natal Midlands: (0331) 45 0453

Northern Natal: (0354) 74 181

Border: (0431) 43 6733

Eastern Cape: (041) 41 1618

Transkei: (0471) 31 0757

Western Cape: (021) 696 4154

being influenced by peer pressure. All this can help you explain the importance of safer sex to your partner.

It might also help you understand more about things you thought you already knew. ☺



★ **STAY
WITH ONE
PARTNER**

Three Wise (Wo)men

In Rome, the Pope sat back in his chair and brushed an imaginary crumb from his pure white robe.

“A truly great work,” one of his Cardinals said, having read the Pope’s next sermon.

“We must always ensure that our position on contraception is made clear to our flock.”

“Yes,” agreed the Pontiff. “The Scriptures are specific — the physical union of man and woman is for one purpose only: procreation (having children). Any man-made barriers used to avoid conception are sinful. With that there can be no argument.”

In Rio, Mariana breathed in sharply and shifted her bulk in the hard plastic seat on the bus. Heavily pregnant with her fifth child, she hoped the birth would be quicker than with her previous child. Then, she had been off work for almost two weeks, and as a result had been sacked from her job. Although her new employer had promised to go by the labour laws, this did not cover maternity leave. But, as her parish priest always told her, every child is a gift from God.

In Bulawayo, Stephen’s voice rose above the noise of the other commuters at the taxi rank. He grinned as he told his friends that when he gets married, he would not hesitate to beat his new wife, should she fail in any of her wifely duties.

“A wife has to be trained,” he said. “Praised if she does something right, and punished if she makes a mistake.”

In Birmingham, Carole



Graphic: Off Our Backs

By Maxine Jones

looked at her bruised face in the mirror. Her husband, Bob, had thrown one of his tantrums when he returned from work to find his supper was not ready. Carole had been forced to work late at her part-time job in the supermarket, and had missed her bus home. Luckily, one of the other women had given her a lift. But, as Bob always pointed out, he was the one with the “real” job. He couldn’t be expected to come home and cook as well.

“For better or worse,” Carole murmured as she dabbed anti-septic cream on the cut above her eye.

In Bombay, Ranjit looked at his first-born daughter’s report card from school. Despite the impressive marks, he had already decided she would not be returning to school after the

holiday.

As his father had told him: “What is the point in educating girls when all they will do is get married and bear children?” His wife was a good case in point. She had been one of the few women in her year at university but had agreed, after a little persuasion, to drop out when he had asked her to marry him. It would be better to concentrate his efforts — and money — on ensuring his son finished school and went on to university. Perhaps he would be a doctor.

In Boston, Elizabeth knew that she would not get the promotion. Despite having six years first-hand experience in production work, she did not have the required qualifications. She was sure they had only interviewed her for appearance’s sake. Not for the first time, she wondered what it would have been like if her and Ian had waited until finishing college before getting married. Well, no matter. She had a loving husband and two beautiful children — what more could she ask for?

But ... in Montevideo, Christina took her contraception pills, confessed to the parish priest and carried out her penance every week.

In Soweto, Thandi filed for divorce after her husband put her in hospital for the third time.

In Lagos, Bola told her fiance that she would not set a date for their wedding until after they had both graduated.

And the world turned. ☉

Published in Sister Namibia Vol 6 No 3

HEALTH BRIEFS

Gender discrimination in children's health

The health needs of girls are often ignored. In the family, food is often unequally divided between boys and girls. Yet girls are expected to work harder in the home than boys. Their duties include cleaning, washing, cooking

and caring for younger brothers and sisters.

In poorer countries girls are more likely to be underfed than boys.

One of the long term effects of not eating properly weakens reproductive health. In many communities, girls are expected to begin bearing

children soon after puberty. Pregnancy at a young age can injure the health of the girl permanently, especially if she is underfed.

SA government's plan on AIDS

The Government of National Unity has set aside 257 million rand as part of a two-year plan to prevent the spread of AIDS.

It is estimated that about 500 000 (four percent) people in South Africa are HIV positive. The number doubled between 1992 and 1993.

The plan is aimed at preventing the spread of AIDS by promoting safer sex and distributing condoms. It also seeks to improve the care of people who are infected.

Demand for children's health care drops

The increased demand for children's health care soon after President Mandela announced free health care for children under the age of six, has gone down in most PWV clinics and hospitals.

PWV health minister Amos Masondo said the high figures in June had probably been because of a flu epidemic and other illnesses which came along with a harsh winter. In July, 11 of the 12 Soweto clinics showed a decrease in the demand for health services for children. ☼

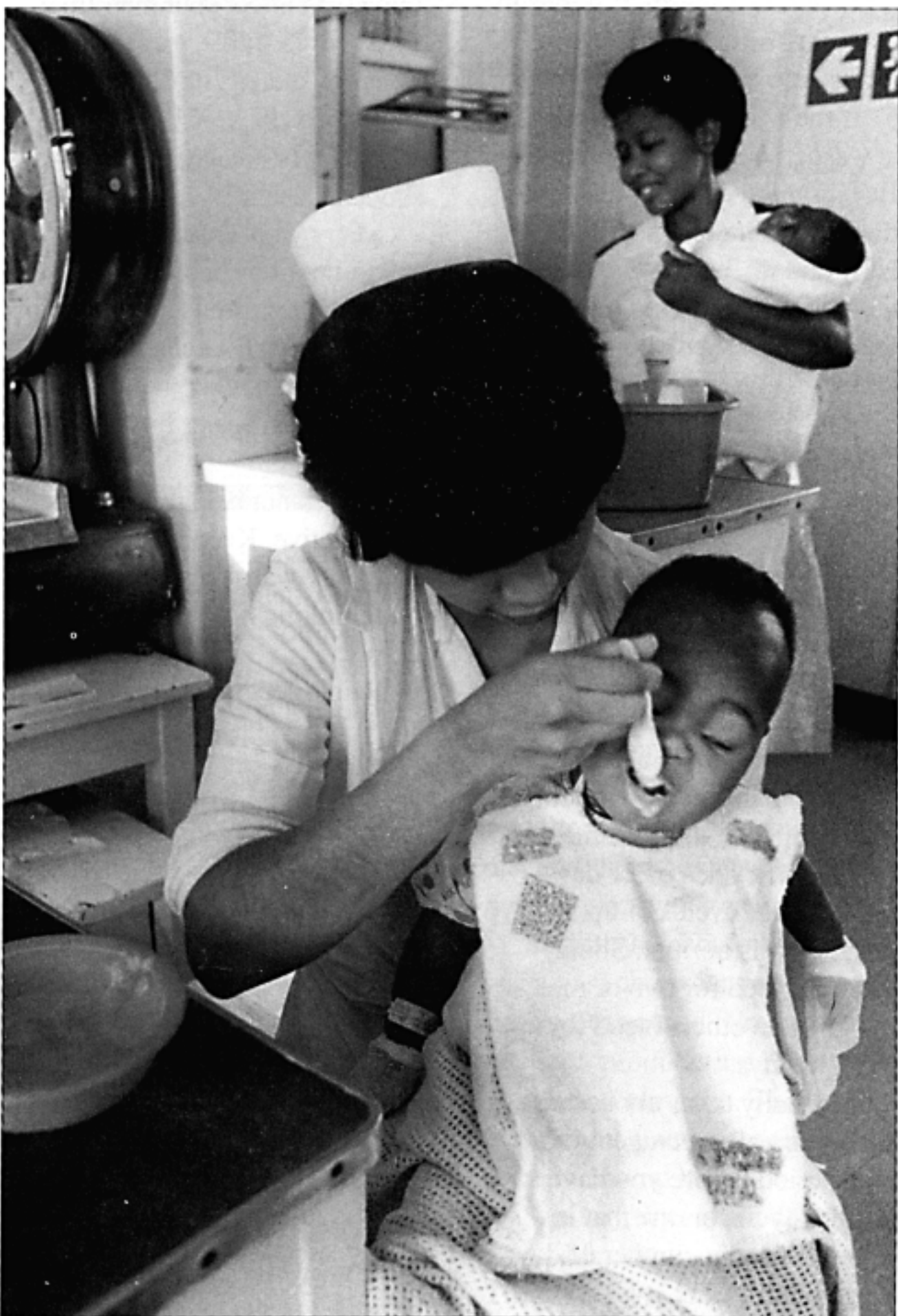


Photo: Cedric Nunn

Period pains

What happens when you have your period? *SPEAK* looks at how you can make menstruation less of a pain...

It's the time of the month most women hate. Back pains, cramps and moodiness are common complaints when we get our monthly periods. But what is actually happening to our bodies and what can be done to make these few days bearable?

The few days that you get your period is only part of a woman's menstrual cycle, which lasts between 25 and 34 days.

Day 1: The first day of your cycle is when your bleeding starts. This is when the lining of your uterus sheds and the blood that has been stored for the past two weeks gets released because it is not needed. Menstruation or bleeding lasts for about two to eight days.

Day 6-13: One egg or ovum in your ovary starts to ripen. Meanwhile the lining of your uterus starts to get thicker.

Day 14: The egg is released from the ovary. The lining of the uterus is now thick and spongy so that a fertilized egg can grow in it.

Day 15-21: The egg travels down the Fallopian tube. If a sperm from a man is present, fertilisation happens here.

Day 22: The egg arrives in

the uterus. If the egg has been fertilised by a sperm, it settles in the lining of the uterus and grows into a baby.

If the egg is not fertilised, it is washed out with the blood. Because you are not pregnant, the blood is not needed for a baby and the body tells the uterus to contract and release the extra blood. Then you start a new cycle all over again.

Everybody is different

A girl can get her first period at about 13 years of age. But it is still normal for it to happen from eight to 18 years. A woman's periods stop when she is aged between 45 and 60.

A woman's cycle is about 28 days long, but some women have short cycles of 21 days. Others have cycles of up to 40 days. This is normal. Some women bleed for two or three days, while others bleed for up to eight days.

It usually takes about three to four years after you get your first period before you have a regular cycle, or one that is about the same number of days each month. Check what your cycle is by counting the number

of days from the first day of your period to the day before your next period starts.

Sometimes women have irregular periods, for example, once every few months. This can be normal.

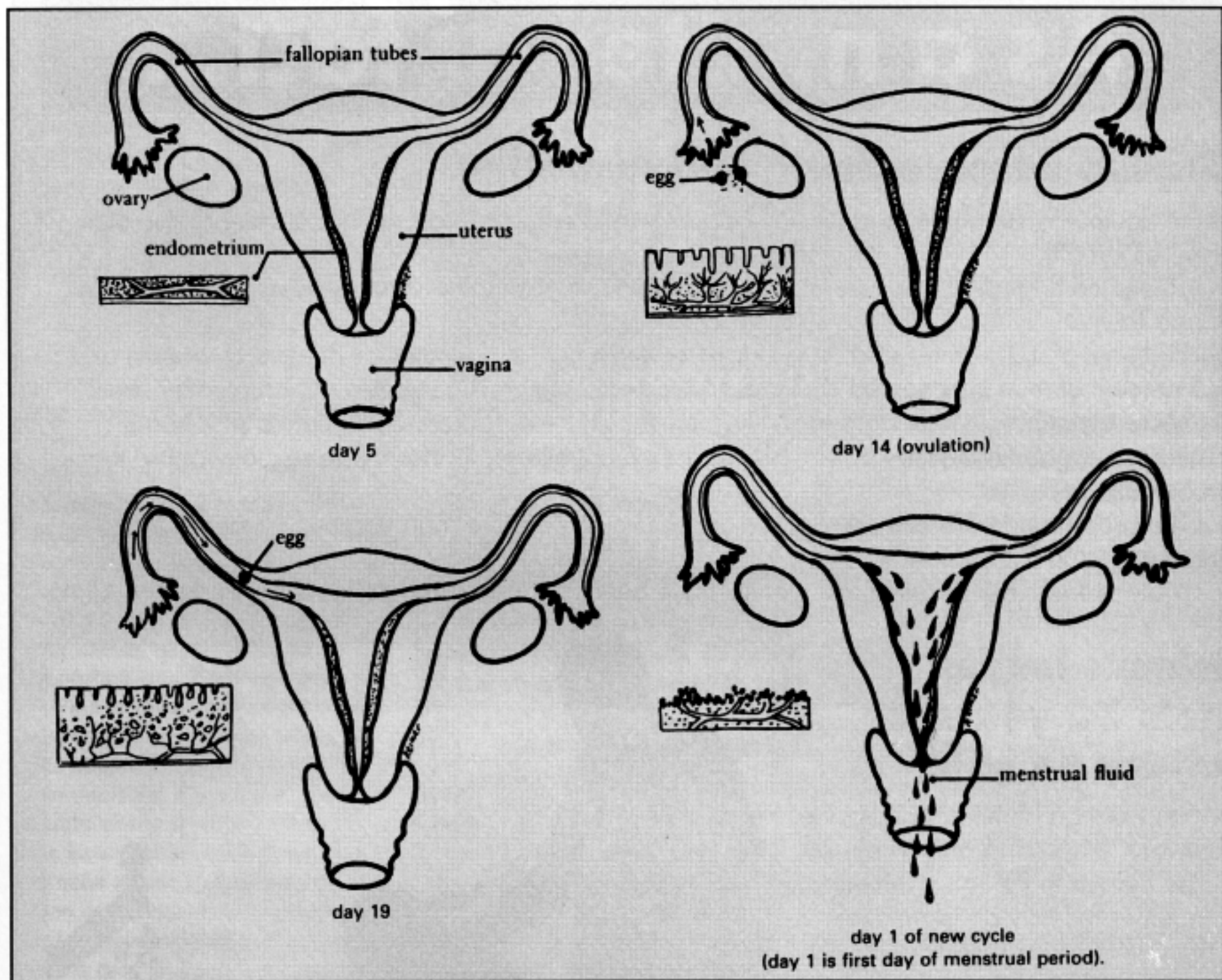
If you miss your period you could be pregnant. But many things can affect your menstrual cycle, for example, exercise, travel, stress, dieting, illness and some medicines. Ask your nearest clinic for advice if your period suddenly changes.

Many women have very painful periods because of the way the uterus muscles tighten and contract. Exercise or a hot bath can help relax the uterus and allow an easier flow of blood.

It does not help to lie in bed. Keep active. Keeping your back and belly warm with a blanket and drinking hot milk can also help.

Painkillers like Panado can

Many things can affect your menstrual cycle - exercise, travel, stress, dieting, illness and some medicines.



relieve some of the pain too. If you are in extreme pain, ask your doctor or clinic for a stronger painkiller.

Some women lose a lot of blood during their periods. Others lose only a few spoonfuls. Visit the clinic or see your doctor if you are bleeding very heavily. If you lose a lot of blood, make sure you eat extra food with iron in it, like meat, fish, eggs, green vegetables and beans.

If you are short of iron, you may get anaemia, a sickness of the blood which makes you very tired and weak.

Wrong beliefs

There are many unfair beliefs

that make women feel their blood is dirty and they are not clean. Some believe women should not exercise, wash their hair, have sex, bath or play sport when they have their periods. However, it is healthy and normal for a woman to menstruate and she should continue with her daily activities as usual.

In fact, she should wash her body well and wear products to soak up the blood. Nowadays, the main products are sanitary towels and tampons. They come in different sizes, depending on how much you bleed.

Sanitary towels are disposable pads that absorb the blood. They have a strip to stick to your panties. Change the towel

every few hours. Wrap it in toilet paper before throwing it away. Don't flush it down a toilet or it can block the toilet. Tampons are rolls of tight cotton wool that fit into your vagina. Unlike a towel, a tampon absorbs the blood before it comes out your vagina. Follow the directions in the package on how to insert one.

Tampons can cause sores you may not notice on the vaginal walls. Some women experience vaginal irritation, itching, soreness or unusual odours while using tampons. If you do, stop using them or change brands.

There are often new products on the market. Avoid perfumed tampons and sanitary towels. ☼

As a matter of fact...

Rapists deserve death and castration

If the South African public had its way, rapists would either be hanged or castrated (have their penises cut off).

This is the finding of a survey of 1 300 men and women conducted by Research Surveys in Cape Town.

Eight out of 10 women said rape sentences were too low. Almost 29 percent of women and 35 percent of men interviewed considered the death sentence a suitable punishment for rape.

More women than men agreed that rapists should be castrated. South Africa's National Children's Rights Committee has called for rapists of children or those who sexually abuse them to be castrated.

The group made this call after police arrested a 29-year-old man accused of raping a two-year-old girl in Cape Town.

More than 3 000 cases in five months have been reported to the police Child Protection Unit.

Islamic leader gets 30 years for attack on wife

What went on behind closed doors between a husband and wife used to be hidden in Pakistan. But no longer — recently an Islamic religious leader was sentenced to 30 years in jail for torturing his wife.

"Everyone is taking about this case," said Shahnaz Bokhari, head of the Progressive Women's Association, a feminist group which first publicised the case.

The religious leader strapped his wife to a bed and tortured her with electric rods in her vagina and anus.

Feminists hope the sentence — the highest ever imposed on a husband for abusing his wife — will help change attitudes towards violence against women in Pakistan.

Until now, Pakistani women who are abused by their husbands, brothers or fathers have had little or no access to the law.



Priest bites woman

A Zionist Christian Church priest who is accused of biting the private parts of a female member of his congregation, told a court in Swaziland that he could not remember what happened because he was in a trance.

Pat Dlamini is said to have grabbed the woman and began beating her with a sjambok. He told her she was possessed by an inhlanga (evil spirit) and would be turned into a witch.

He then pulled her to the floor, lifted her dress, buried his head between her thighs and began biting her private parts and buttocks. The woman told the court Dlamini said he did it to get rid of the inhlanga.

Not ready for sex

I have been with my boyfriend for five years. I love him very much. Although I know he loves me too, I have decided not to sleep with him until we get married. Most of our friends think I am being old-fashioned. They even say my boyfriend might leave me for someone else who is prepared to have sex with him.

Should I go ahead and sleep with him even if he does not complain? Please help.

Nobukhosi, Hammanskraal

Dear Nobukhosi

It is your decision to remain a virgin until you get married and your friends should respect your choice. Your body belongs to you, and not to your friends or your boyfriend. Your friends do not seem to be supporting you. Ask them why.

Your partner has not put pressure on you to have sex with him. This seems to show he respects your decision. If you have any doubts about what he thinks of this issue, tell him you would like to make a date to talk about it. Open communication is very important for relationships to work.

All the best

Sis

Difficult brother-in-law

I have come to accept that problems with in-laws are part of my marriage. I try very hard to accommodate my husband's family but I don't think my brother-in-law appreciates my efforts. He is always making fun of me. He insults me for no reason at all.

My husband keeps telling me he does not mean what he says. But I know he does and it really hurts. I don't want him to destroy my marriage because I love my husband very much. What can I do?

Confused, Durban

Dear Confused

It sounds as if you are living under very difficult conditions. This must be putting a lot of

Dear Sis

Speak to someone who cares! If there is something bothering you and you want advice, write to: Dear Sis, SPEAK, PO Box 556, Johannesburg, 2000

stress on you. Being made fun of and having insults thrown at you should not have to be part of your marriage.

Your brother-in-law seems to have problems of his own. However, you should not have to bear the brunt of them.

There are some steps you can take. Some of them may seem almost impossible right now, but do consider them:

- Tell your husband you want a special meeting with him. Explain how serious the problem is, and what it is doing to your life. Ask him to try and see things through your eyes. Your husband needs to know that he has not yet been part of solving the problem. It is part of his responsibility to do so. Discuss possible new solutions with him;
- Contact a social worker and

discuss the problem with her;

- There are family counselling services in Durban. It would probably be very useful if you and your husband could go to discuss the problem. At a later stage your brother-in-law could also attend. It is often very helpful to have an outside person help you to talk through the problem;

- Try to ignore your brother-in-law;
- Look after yourself. This kind of problem can affect your health. Do things which make you feel good about yourself.
- Talk through your problems with friends you trust. It is important to keep getting it off your chest.

Contact telephone numbers:

Durban Child and Family Welfare Society

(031) 23-9313

Family and Marriage Society of South Africa (FAMSSA)

(031) 304-8991

Hope this will help.

Sis

GAY PRIDE PARADE '94

CELEBRATE UNITY
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All enquiries: Paul (011) 648-4056

GAY PRIDE PARADE

TAXI TALK

Down with lobola

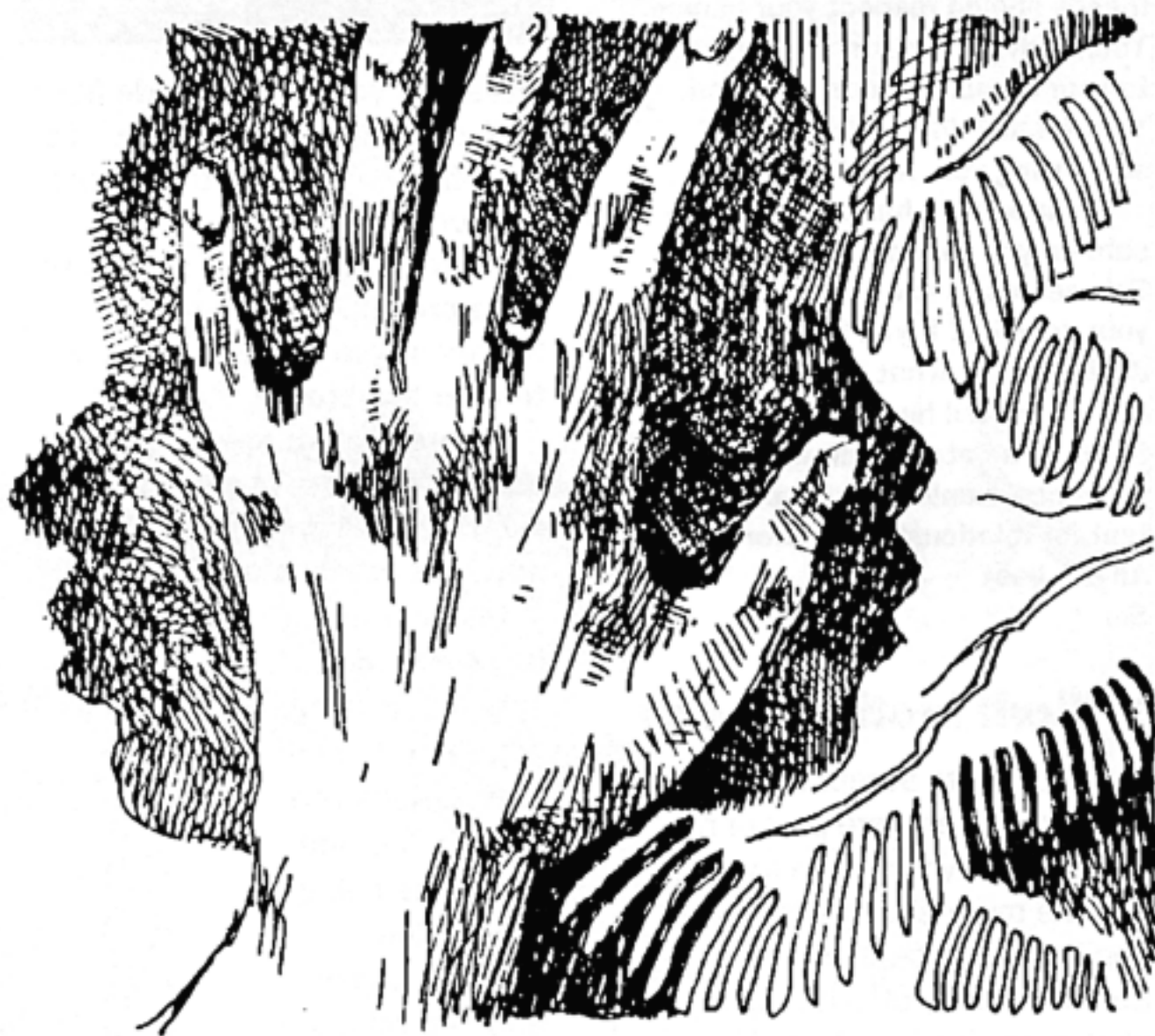
Now, more than ever, women and men should fight against the practice of paying lobola, writes *Busisiwe Thando*

Lobola should be abolished. This has been my position ever since I got some understanding of what lobola is all about. Recently, however, my boyfriend, Sibusiso, paid lobola for me. When we decided to live together, we had nothing to worry about except, of course, he knew he'd have to pay lobola to my family. I wouldn't have a problem with this if I also had to pay some money to his family. This would have put us on an equal footing.

I believe in having an equal relationship, and so does my partner. The fact that he had to pay, and I did not, put me in a weaker position. I felt like a product for sale. I felt disempowered. Although Sibusiso did not make an issue out of it, I think about it a lot. And it makes me very angry.

A few days after the lobola was paid, I went through a very difficult time. I got upset very easily and fought with Sibusiso over petty things. I thought he was feeling great about his purchase and that he was more powerful than me. Although this was not true, I felt I had to do something to prove I was still his equal in the relationship, and not an item. Fortunately, he understood how I was feeling. We talked about it and agreed it was something we had to do.

I suppose we could have defied



our families. We could have got married without paying lobola. However, we did not do that, although we disagreed with lobola in principle.

For him, it wouldn't have been a problem. His family wouldn't have minded if lobola had not been required.

I would have been disowned by my family. They would never have forgiven me for having disgraced them. They would have regarded

me as an ungrateful daughter who had turned against her own family for a man. I love my family and I value our relationship. So, I let myself be bought. I see lobola as the price I had to pay for peace of mind and happiness.

One thing, though, makes me feel better — I have the power to change things. Sibusiso and I will not make our children go through the same misery. That is very comforting. ☪

NOTICES

Find out more about Community and Development

The following publications are available from Planact:

"Mangoana o tshoara thipa ka bohaleng" - an analysis of gender sensitive development in the transition to democracy in South Africa. It focuses on the position of black, working class women in the urban areas. This publication is free.

"Plan and Act" is a simple, illustrated, step by step guide to strategic planning for community based and non-profit organisations.

The publications cost R10 each for community-based organisations and R15 each for other organisations and individuals.

If you wish to order any of these publications write to:

Planact
P O Box 93540
Yeoville 2143
Telephone: (011) 648 9117

Info Africa Nova Women's Conference 1995

You are invited to participate in this conference in which the aim is to mobilise the women of Southern Africa for self-reliant development. The objective of this Skills Development Conference is to update people on the state of research on women, supply them with skills in reconstruction and development and train them how to find out what the need to their communities are.

If you are interested please submit ideas for presentations, workshops, discussion groups, etc.

Please forward your topic and a summary of 150-200 words as well as an updated CV to reach us by 31 October 1994 to:

Info Africa Nova
P O Box 4649
Pretoria 0001
Telephone: (012) 662 1588

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University of Natal
King George V Ave
Durban 4001

Organisations which help abused women (from page 9)

- People Opposing Women Abuse (POWA)
Phone: (011) 642-4345
PO Box 93416, Yeoville, 2143, Johannesburg
- Agisanang Domestic Abuse Prevention and Training (ADAPT)
Phone: (011) 440 1231
PO Box 175, Bergvlei, 2012
- Ilitha Labantu (Cape Town)
Phone: (021) 448 4016
- Centre for Peace Action (Johannesburg)
Phone: (011) 342 3840
- Advice Desk for Abused Women (Durban)
Phone: (031) 820 2862
- Women Against Women Abuse (WAWA)
Phone: (011) 945 5531
PO Box 1195, Eldorado Park, 1813
- Laudium Advice Office (Pretoria)
Phone: (012) 374 4792
- Nicro Women's Support Centre
Phone: (021) 47 4000
PO Box 10034, Caledon Square, 7905, Cape Town
- Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation
Trauma Clinic
Phone: (011) 403 5102
PO Box 30778, Braamfontein, 2017, Johannesburg
- WILDO
Phone: (011) 838 7504
c/o DRC, PO Box 6079, Johannesburg, 2000



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