

SPEAK

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Gcina Mhlope

Story telling

The Peace Accord

Will this bring peace?

Disabled Women

A Fighting force

The Struggle

for safe night transport

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Cover picture : Debbie Yazbek for Tribute. Story Pg 6

SPEAK Comment

As we were writing this issue of SPEAK, our country was mourning. Mourning the murder of Comrade Sam Ntuli, and the deaths of those killed at his funeral. Mourning the death of Diepkloof ANC Youth League activist Vuyana Mabaxa shot down by police early one Sunday morning. Mourning for the ten people killed by gunmen in a Soweto tavern. Mourning for too many others to mention by name.

The Peace Accord has been signed but the violence has not ended. SPEAK has decided to focus on peace in this issue as we believe it is up to all of us to do what we can to end the violence.

We look at the main points of the Peace Accord, and we asked women from organisations involved in the Accord if they think the Accord can bring peace. We agree with those women who say the face of the violence is changing and hit squads are now specifically targeting activists.

We agree that though the Accord might not be perfect, it is a first step on the road to peace.

All of us must make our calls for peace heard. We must give peace a chance. We do not want a new South Africa washed in the blood of our comrades.

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We welcome Gita Pather who joins SPEAK in Marketing and Promotions

We wish Karen Hurt well during her leave from SPEAK.

SPEAK's Durban office will be closed from December 1991.

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Letters

READERS SPEAK OUT

SPEAK IS NEEDED

Dear SPEAK

This is to acknowledge receipt of a bound copy of the 1990 volume of SPEAK. I am most grateful to SPEAK for making such a wonderful resource available to me. May I take this opportunity to wish you well in the coming years. SPEAK is needed most at this time, when the mirage of victory might blind us to our responsibilities to women and their liberation.

Saki Macozoma

ANC

I FEEL ENCOURAGED

Dear SPEAK

I am very pleased with your magazine. I have been looking for such a thing for a long time and didn't know whom to contact. I am a girl of 22 years of age. I feel encouraged by your words in SPEAK. I am a scholar/student and would like to know more information about sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) and other diseases. I would like you to send me this magazine. I shall be very happy if my request is considered.

Yours faithfully

Scholar

Skilpadfontein

*Dear Scholar,
We have sent you a subscription form to SPEAK and a copy of the*

Thanks to all our readers who have written in. Share your views with SPEAK readers. Write to us at P.O.Box 45213 Mayfair 2108 Johannesburg

magazine. We do health articles on many things and we are encouraged to hear that you enjoyed them. We hope that you enjoy all the other articles we write as well.

If you want to get more information on health issues, you can write to Health For All, Sawkins Road, Rondebosch, 7700, Cape Town and ask them for more information/pamphlets on diseases and health issues you are interested in. We hope you carry on being encouraged by SPEAK!

FROM THE USA

Dear SPEAK

I can't tell you how wonderful it has been to receive the recent issues of SPEAK. Here in the US we are told we are living in an era of "post-feminism". The "women's liberation movement" has been reduced to the "women's movement" and concerns itself mostly with lifestyles and women's culture. So when I saw "ANC Takes a Stand on Women's Liberation"

I was thrilled. And every issue I've seen (no's 32-34) has been packed with the type of issues and analysis we used to talk about but have lost.

I hope you will be able to keep up the great work you are doing.

I appreciate it from the bottom of my heart and know it must be difficult.

So, Fight on, Sisters!

Carol Hanisch

USA

ART STUDIES

Dear SPEAK

I am very interested in art and I would like to see myself being successful in art. I would like you to provide me with any information about where I could study art.

I am particularly interested in FUBA - the Federated Union of Black Arts. If you have an address could you please send it to me.

Yours faithfully

Jacob Tebogo Moremi

Dear Jacob

We have had many people asking us for information about art classes. You can write to FUBA at 66 Wolhuter Street, Newtown, Johannesburg 2001. You can phone them at: (011) 834-7125.

Other places that offer art

JOKES ASIDE

*A leading Natal newspaper has been running a debate recently on women's rights. All well and good, except they have insisted on calling women leaders **chairmen** of their organisations. When the newspaper was asked why they kept doing this, the reply was: "It's the newspaper's style, and anyway it's the editor's opinion that **chairperson** sounds stupid". We think it's time that newspaper editors started changing with the times...or they may be the ones that look stupid...



*Talking about language... at a conference held in Cape Town on Language in a Future South Africa, it was proposed that all language that discriminates against women should be changed. One of the male delegates, a professor, objected saying we should be very careful about changing the meaning of words. A female delegate jumped up and pointed out that it is these very meanings that are oppressive to women and help to keep them down. Fortunately for women, the other delegates

seemed to be more aware of the problems with language and supported this proposal.

We wonder if this professor would have dared raise objections if the proposal was to change racism in language...



*Did you hear the one about the Minister of Finance trying to justify Value Added Tax (VAT)? On TV he said VAT is a fairer tax for all South Africans. We wonder if he would say the same thing if his salary was R300 a month.



*Still on TV. SABC recently ran a programme on TV1 looking at the problems of domestic workers. It's good to see they're finally admitting that domestic workers have problems, but it seems as if they've still got a long way to go. "All domestic servants want," the narrator said at the end of the programme, "is a master who will treat them fairly". Come on SABC -

no one in the world wants a "master"! Dogs have masters, workers have bosses. All domestic workers want is not to be treated like dogs.



*A recently returned exile told us about his problems when applying for a passport at a South African consulate in Canada. He said the official at the consulate seemed to be over willing to help him. He filled in all of the form except the section asking him what race group he was. He had been told that racial classification was now dead in South Africa so went up to the official crossly and pointed to this section asking "What is this". She looked a bit baffled and then said politely - "well if you want to, you can also fill in whether you are Xhosa, Zulu, Sotho..."



*"Domestic work is not the only work women do. There are relatively few women anywhere in the world who can claim to be just a housewife."
(State of the World's Women)

Story telling is a rich and valuable South African tradition that is in danger of dying. Gcina Mhlope strongly believes it must be kept alive. Bobby Rodwell interviewed her.



Pictures : Debbie Yazbek for TRIBUTE

Gcina Mhlope

Gcina is a woman of the arts. She is a writer, poet, actress and story teller. In recent years she has been the resident director at the Market Theatre in Johannesburg. She has written stories for both adults and children which have been published in books and magazines.

Talking to Gcina is like trying to run next to a steam train. She has so much energy. This comes from her deep love for people. "I love to see people coming together," says Gcina. She tries to achieve this in her work.

"I tell the stories that my grandmother told me. That is our South African tradition and it should not die. Story telling is a way of teaching and through stories we can learn about our history.

"Of course it is different to

the way my grandmother told me stories. Now I often tell stories in a theatre or classroom. My grandmother told me stories around the fire at home. But it is important to keep the tradition going. Children in towns and cities don't know many of our stories."

Gcina spoke about her past. She was born in Hammarsdale in Natal in 1959. She schooled in the Eastern Cape. Then she moved to Johannesburg to work in the early 1980's.

She said: "I worked as a domestic worker. That was my job during the day. At night I would write poetry which was my great love. Because of my writing I was offered a job at Learn and Teach magazine in Johannesburg. I was very happy. I could write about

people's lives. I have always been interested in people.

"While I was at Learn and Teach, I joined a group of people who used to get together and say poetry. I loved that. We would all come together and say our poems for each other. Those poetry evenings were wonderful," said Gcina happily.

Gcina was offered a part in a play written by Maishe Maponya. This was her step into theatre, where Gcina has worked ever since. She travelled overseas with many plays but now feels it is important to work at home. "My people are here," she says "this is where my heart is."

What inspired Gcina to become a writer and story teller?

"Besides my grandmother and



Picture : Eric Millor, Southlight Photographic agency

***Story telling is a way of teaching,
and through stories we can learn about our history.***



Picture : Debbie Yazbek for TRIBUTE

her stories, I loved the book called 'Wrath of the Ancestors' written by AC Jordan (father of the ANC leader Paulo Jordan). He wrote so beautifully in the Xhosa language. I have always been interested in languages, which is another reason why I enjoy telling stories. Also, the Xhosa poetry of JJR Jolobe inspired me.

"Would you believe that I never read any South African women writers when I was young? There were so few. Today there are still very few women in the arts. That makes me sad," she said. "My favourite woman writer today is Bessie Head."

Gcina is a great supporter of SPEAK magazine. She had a message, especially for the women readers. She said: "I want to say to women that they should take action and develop their talents in whatever they enjoy doing in the arts. They have the talent and they can do anything they wish to do!" ☺

Poems by Gcina Mhlope

Say No

Say No, Black Woman
Say No
When they call your
jobless son
a Tsotsi
Say No

Say No, Black Woman
Say No
When they call
Your husband at the
age of 60
a boy
Say No

Say No, Black Woman
Say No
When they rape your
daughter in detention
and call her
a whore
Say No

Say No, Black Woman
Say No
When they call your
white sister
a madam
Say No

Say No, Black Woman
Say No
When they call your
white brother
a Baas
Say No

Say No, Black Woman
Say No
When they call a
trade unionist
a terrorist
Say No

Say No, Black Woman
Say No
When they give you a
back seat
in the liberation wagon
Say No
Yes Black Woman
a Big No

The Dancer

Mama
they tell me you were a dancer
they tell me you had long
beautiful legs to carry your
graceful body
they tell me you were a dancer

Mama,
they tell me you sang beautiful
solos
they tell me you closed your eyes
always when the feeling of the
song was right, and lifted your
face up to the sky
they tell me you were an
enchancing dancer

Mama
they tell me you were so gentle
they talk of a willow tree
swaying lovingly over clear
running water in early spring
when they talk of you
they tell me you were a dancer

Mama
they tell me you were a wedding
dancer
they tell me you smiled and
closed your eyes your arms
curving outward just a little and
your feet shuffling in the sand
tshi tshi tshitshitshitha tshitshi
tshitshitshitha
o heel! how I wish I was there to
see you
they tell me you were a pleasure
to watch

Mama
they tell me I am a dancer too
but I don't know...
I don't know for sure what a
wedding dancer is
there are no more weddings
but many, many funerals
where we sing and dance
running fast with the coffin
of a would-be-bride or would-be-
groom
strange smiles have replaced our
tears
our eyes are full of vengeance
mama

Dear, dear mama,
they tell me I am a funeral dancer

PEACE AT LAST?

Women protest against violence earlier this year. Picture : Karen Hurt, SPEAK

Will the Peace Accord bring peace at last? Will the killings finally stop? Libby Lloyd asked women from some of the organisations involved in this Accord what they thought.



Too many people have died in our country. Too many people have been injured, or been left homeless by the violence in our townships. In September, the ANC, the SACP and Cosatu signed a Peace Accord with Inkatha, the government and many other organisations to try to stop the killings. The PAC and AZAPO were present at the meeting and gave their support to the agreement, but they did not sign the Accord. At the time of the meeting about 11 000 people had been killed since the violence began in 1985. Since then many more people have died. We asked women from some of these organisations if they thought the Peace Accord would bring peace at last.

Baleka Kgositsile, ANC Women's League

"I think it is possible for the Peace Accord to work - but only if all groups stick to it. It is clear that the police and security forces aren't sticking to it. The events in Thokoza after Comrade Sam Ntuli's funeral are clear proof of that.

"In the ANC Women's League we have discussed ways to implement the Peace Accord.

"All of the ANC branches are holding workshops about the Peace Accord and we are urging women to get involved in these meetings so they can understand the Accord.

"We are also urging women to participate actively in the structures that will be set up at local levels. The Women's League will be taking part in a national ANC workshop on the Accord. We can

then facilitate women being integrated into this peace initiative. It is important for women to be integrated into general activity, rather than to work separately.

"We are also planning to organise a women's peace conference for as broad a group of women as possible. We believe it is important to both strengthen and popularise the Peace Accord. Women can be very effective in combating violence and must be involved in this process."

Nomvula Mokonyane, SACP

"Yes, the Peace Accord can work - but only if the parties which have signed it stick to their promises. There are flaws in the Accord, but it is a first step on the road of peace.

"At the moment certain parties aren't sticking to the Accord. The carnage in the East Rand is proof of this. The police and army could have stopped the killings at Sam Ntuli's funeral - they were all there but they focused on the mourners instead of trying to stop the killers.

"It is urgent now that all of us help set up national, regional and local structures of the Peace Accord. Once structures like local dispute committees are set up we may be able to stop the violence.

"Before the Peace Accord, people were often too scared to report things to police, because police were often involved in the violence. The structures of the Accord should make it easier to charge those responsible for violence.

"Women have a specific role to play. We have

PEACE AT LAST?



been victims of the violence - our husbands and sons are being killed, and we are left mourning. "Now is the time to stop crying and accusing, and to work hard to make sure the Peace Accord works."

Maggie Magubane Cosatu Women's Sub-Committee

"The Peace Accord hasn't worked so far only because the government doesn't take it seriously. The government is responsible for this violence, but after they signed the Accord the killing continued.

"Now the face of the violence has changed. Hit squads have taken over and are targeting our people. People in the townships cannot fight professional hit squads.

"Women were left out of this process leading to the signing of the Peace Accord, but we want peace in our communities, and we must make sure the killings stop.

"As women the only thing we can do is to keep on shouting about this violence and making our voices heard. The government must hear that we have had enough. We must force them to take peace seriously.

"As women we are affected the most by this violence. As mothers we feel the pain of other mothers, and all spend sleepless nights worrying about our children. It is very painful."

Isobel Ngwenya, Inkatha Women's Brigade

"The women of Inkatha are behind the Peace Accord. As mothers we need peace. We lose our children, our husbands, our relatives in this fighting.

"The Peace Accord can work - but only if everyone is behind it." SPEAK asked Mrs Ngwenya what she thought about Inkatha's objections to the clause in the Accord which bans the carrying of dangerous weapons.

"We don't carry dangerous weapons," she said. "Our men carry cultural weapons. You know things

SPEAK

like our shields, knobkierries and spears. These are traditional. You know our gentlemen in olden days even used to carry spears with them when they went to make love to a lady."

Ellen Mothopeng, PAC Women's Section

"PAC women support the demand for peace among Africans in Azania.

But until women are involved, we do not believe there will be peace. Women are also victims and should have been involved in this process. Only one woman was a signatory to this Accord.

"Also, we don't see how this Accord will work if the root cause of the violence is not identified. We don't see how this information will be brought to the fore through the Accord. Now activists are being targeted - civic leader Sam Ntuli has been killed and many more leaders will be targeted. There is obviously a professional hit squad involved.

"The people responsible, the people behind these hit squads, are not party to the Accord. Some of them might even have signed the Accord, but I don't think they mean to stick to the Accord."

Rose Ngwenya, Imbeleko (Azapo's women's wing)

"Firstly I would like to point out there were hardly any women involved in this Accord.

"I was one of about only two or three women out of 250 delegates at the planning meeting in June. At the signing of the Accord a few more women were present - but very few.

"There are very good intentions behind the Peace Accord, but there are also many problems with it. I don't think this Accord will bring peace.

"Azapo has continually accused the government of being responsible for this maiming of our people. If the government was serious about stopping the violence it could easily do so, but it doesn't suit them. By making it seem the government is calling for peace, this Accord legitimises the government.

"Nowhere in the Peace Accord was the issue of a third force addressed. This third force is beyond doubt responsible for the violence - but the Accord does not deal with it at all.

"This Accord could isolate us from our people - they are expecting protection, but this Accord won't protect them.

"Lastly I would like to repeat that the intentions of the Accord are good. All of us are craving for peace and we should work out ways amongst the black people in this country to win this peace." ❖



Main Features of the Peace Accord

The National Peace Accord is a legal document. All the organisations that signed it have to stick to the agreement. SPEAK looks at what this document says, and what it means to all of us.

The Peace Accord identifies five important areas of action to try to achieve peace in our country. It also says that national, regional and local structures must be set up to monitor the Accord and to investigate the causes of the violence.

Main features

1. Code of Conduct for Police

The agreement has laid down rules for the security forces and the SAP. The agreement says the police shall be fair and not take sides in the violence.

Here are some of the rules:

- * Police must try to disarm anyone carrying dangerous weapons.
- * Police must be identified. All police must have either their names or numbers on their uniforms and police cars must have an identification number painted on their sides. The cars must have genuine numberplates. This section of the Peace Accord however does not cover police cars which are involved in "genuine police undercover work".
- * The Police must protect the people. The SAP must respond quickly to calls for help. They must also act to prevent violence if they have been warned in advance of clashes.

The agreement also sets up structures to make sure the police stick to the rules, and fulfil their duties:

A National Police Board

This will be made up of equal numbers of police representatives and members of the public. This Board will investigate how the SAP can better serve the community.

Special Police Investigation Units

These will be set up in regions to investigate complaints of police being one sided. These Units will also investigate crimes of political violence.

A Police Ombudsman will also be appointed by the Minister of Law and Order to hear complaints against the SAP and to monitor investigations about these complaints.

2. Code of Conduct for Political Organisations

This sets out rules for political parties and organisations and their members.

Under this Code of Conduct, all political parties

must allow opposition organisations to organise freely. Political parties and their members may not kill or threaten anybody because of her or his beliefs. They may also not force anyone to join a party or an organisation; attend a meeting; or force anyone to take part in a boycott or to go on strike. All political parties must inform local authorities of the date, place and time of events. If people are marching they must also inform authorities which way and what roads they will be marching along. Lines of communication must be set up between the different parties and organisations. Parties and organisations should give each other names, addresses and contact numbers. This should happen at a local, regional and national level. Organisations must also appoint liaison people to deal with problems that might arise at a local, regional and national level.

3. People can Defend Themselves

The agreement says everybody has the right to defend themselves and their property. It says that people can form self-defence units in their neighbourhoods. These defence units however cannot be formed along party political lines.

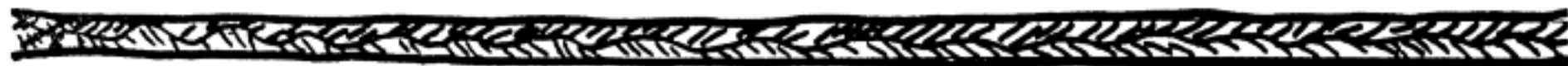
4. Reconstruction and development

This section of the Peace Accord recognises that conditions in communities often add to conflict. It sets up structures to help communities hit by violence. Reconstruction and development sub-committees will be set up to rebuild communities that have been damaged by violence. This could include things like rebuilding homes for people whose homes have been destroyed.

These sub-committees are also responsible for looking at ways to improve conditions in areas to try to prevent possible outbreaks of violence.

5. Special Criminal Courts

The Accord says there is an urgent need for special criminal courts to be set up to deal only with crimes of political violence. These courts will be set up by the Department of Justice, together with Law Societies and the Bar Council. The courts will be set up in regions, and if there is a need, they may



Main Features of Peace Accord

also be set up in local communities. People charged with crimes of political violence will be taken to court quickly and it will not be so easy for them to intimidate or kill witnesses.

Mechanisms for Peace

Structures have to be set up to make sure that the rules are stuck to, to investigate violence, and to solve and prevent conflict. Committees are being set up at national, regional and local levels.

At national level three structures are being set up:

National Peace Committee

The National Peace Committee will be made up of representatives of the major organisations that signed the Accord, and will be chaired by people appointed from the religious and business community. This body will oversee the Peace Accord and will monitor and make recommendations on the Accord.

National Peace Secretariat

A full-time working committee will work under the National Peace Committee.

Four people will be employed by the National Peace Committee to work for this body. A representative from the Department of Justice will also sit on this body - but all the organisations who signed the agreement will have to approve of this appointment. This body is accountable to the National Peace Committee and will co-ordinate and help set up regional and local bodies.

Commission of Enquiry

Alongside these bodies a Commission of Enquiry will be appointed to investigate instances of public violence and intimidation and recommend ways to stop the violence. This Commission of Enquiry will be chaired by a judge or retired judge. The vice-chair will also be from the legal profession. The National Peace Committee will submit a list of names for the other people who will sit on this Commission.

If this body works well, we should be able to find out who are the real instigators of the violence.

A number of other committees will also be set up at a regional and local levels.

Regional Dispute Resolution Committees

These will be made up of representatives of the community as well as members of the business community and the security forces. This body will monitor the Peace Accord at a regional level and will try to stop violence. It will also give information to the national Commission of Enquiry on causes of violence and steps taken to prevent violence. And it will help the national Commission of Enquiry to

establish a regional commission of enquiry.

Local Dispute Resolution Committees

The regional committees will establish these local committees in areas where it thinks it is particularly necessary. The local committees will be made up of members of the community. They will help make sure that organisations stick to the Peace Accord, and will try to settle fights at a grassroots level. These committees will have to agree among themselves on rules about marches, rallies and gatherings. They will have to liaise with the local police about such meetings.

Justices of the Peace

Justices of the Peace will be appointed in local areas in consultation with local structures. The Justices of the Peace will come from the communities. They will be given limited powers to settle fights.

WHAT DOES ALL OF THIS MEAN TO YOU?

1. Complaints about the police

If you have a complaint against the police, or if you think they are not sticking to the rules, you must report it to a local peace committee or to the Police Ombudsman in your region. The Police Ombudsman must then refer the complaint to the special police investigation unit. He/she must make sure the complaint is properly investigated.

The Ombudsman also has the power to recommend that police officers who are being investigated are suspended.

2. Political Parties

If you have a complaint about the behaviour of members of a political party, you or your organisation should report it to local peace committees or Justices of the Peace. If this problem cannot be solved at a grassroots level then the matter must be referred to the National Peace Committee.

3. Knowledge of Violence

If you have information about people who have committed violence, or about what is behind the violence, you should give this information to the Commission of Enquiry. If you can identify people you should give the information to local or regional peace committees and to the Special Police Investigation Units so that these people can be charged in the courts. You can also ask for witness protection if you feel you need it.

If you hear rumours or get information that an attack is being planned, you should make sure both local liaison committees are informed and that the police are told. Under these rules, the police must act if they get such information. ☺



Vaal women march to the ISCOR hostel in protest against the violence picture: City Press

WOMEN OF STEEL

There are many stories of women who have taken action to make sure their shouts of "We've had enough of these killings" are heard. This story about women from Boipatong in the Vaal Triangle is just one of them

Residents in the Vaal Triangle say that since July last year over 100 people in the Vaal Triangle have been killed in the violence. The township of Boipatong has been one of the townships in the area that has been very badly hit.

The residents of Boipatong say the violence started after Iscor moved its workers from a hostel in Sebokeng into the unused KwaMadala hostel across the road from Boipatong. The workers were moved there because they feared attacks. Since then though, the residents of Boipatong say Inkatha has used the hostel to launch attacks against the township.

Iscor has denied this, but residents of Boipatong are adamant that they have seen "strangers" going in and out of the complex.

Then on July 3 this year the home of local ANC activist Ernest Sotsu was attacked and his wife, daughter and grandchild were murdered.

This was the final straw for the women of Boipatong.

"We knew then we had to do something," said local activist Beauty Silela. "So many people have been killed, and the killers are using the hostel right next door to us. We knew we would never have peace as long as they live next door to us. We knew that as women we must make our voices heard."

Together with the Women's Ministries of the Vaal Council of Churches they decided to organise a march on Iscor to demand that the attacks stop. Women from all over the Vaal joined the march to demand an end to the killings. They handed a memorandum to the Iscor management. In the memorandum the women said the hostel was used as a springboard for terrorist attacks against residents. They called on Iscor to stop harbouring "these enemies of peace".

Iscor management wrote

back to the women asking them for a meeting. The meeting was finally held at the end of September.

Management again said only Iscor workers were staying at the hostel, but the women said they didn't believe that.

"These people have been our neighbours before," Beauty told SPEAK, "and we weren't enemies, so why would we be enemies now? People have reported seeing white men in kombis going in and out of the complex."

Management agreed to organise a meeting between them and the hostel dwellers to talk about their fears.

When we were writing this story, the meeting with the hostel dwellers had not yet been organised. Beauty said though she felt this meeting was important, and that the women would do anything to try to end the killings.

"We have to do something to stop this violence," she said. "Maybe if we women raise our voices loud enough then the violence might end." ❖

American activist Angela Davis visited South Africa recently. While she was here she gave a number of public lectures and workshops around the country.

Libby Lloyd of SPEAK interviewed her just before she left South Africa.

Angela

Angela Davis is a feminist, a communist, an activist, an author, an academic, a fighter. She has been fighting racism, sexism and exploitation in the United States since the 1960's - and she has been harrassed because of her involvement in these struggles for justice.

In 1969 she was fired from her job as a professor at a university because she was an active member of the Communist Party. In the 1970's she was on the US security list of the ten most wanted people. She was arrested and charged with murder, kidnapping and conspiracy. After spending 18 months in jail, she was found not guilty and released.

Today Comrade Angela works for the same university that fired her and she is continuing to fight against repression in her country.

"That is a kind of victory," she said, laughing.

Comrade Angela spoke about the struggles of progressive organisations in the States at the moment. She painted a picture of the US that is very different from that we are shown on our television screens.

"We are having again to refight the battles we won in the 60's and 70's," she said.

"The present conservative government has moved backwards and we are having

to work hard to try to stop it from reversing the gains we made in the years before.

"Women, people of colour and the working class are most affected by this. There is an attack on affirmative action programmes, the union movement has been weakened, and we are again battling about women's reproductive rights and the right to legal abortions."

She said racism is worse now than it was 20 years ago.

"At the moment a young black man has more of a chance of being jailed than of going to university. Twenty five percent of young black men are in jails. We also have a huge drug problem in our black communities. Most of these drug users are women. As more and more women take drugs, we have also had an increase in prostitution because they have to sell themselves in order to buy drugs."

Speak asked her about how the women's movement in the US is fighting this.

"At the moment we are busy building broader structures," she said. "We know that in order to develop a powerful women's movement, we have to build strong structures that include all the women in our society. Many

issues we are fighting for affect all women and cut across the barriers of race and class. But we also have to make sure that women of colour and working class women are leading these structures."

She said the women's movement is also trying to involve men in the struggle against sexism.

"It is not only a women's fight. For example, men must also organise against violence in the home. Men must educate other men about these issues and must challenge each other about sexism. Men must say that it is wrong, and that such things don't make you more manly. Men must redefine what is masculine and manly for themselves."

But the long battle to put the oppression of women on the agenda of political organisations and trade unions is continuing.

"We have made some gains in this. The feminist movement definitely had an impact on the civil rights movement (the movement to fight against racism) and the trade union movement," she said. "But it is difficult to make people see that issues about reproduction and sexual assault are political issues not just personal issues. These issues must be taken up politically.

"It has been exciting seeing

Davis

women in South Africa grappling with these questions. If you can present these issues as political issues and as part of the national liberation struggle, then I think it will change the way that these issues are taken up around the world."

Comrade Angela also spoke about women's involvement in the struggle against capitalism and racism in the US. She said that, like in South Africa, the role women have played in these struggles is mostly still unwritten.

"We read about the famous people like Martin Luther King. But nowhere is there any record or acknowledgement of the role ordinary women played in the struggle. Often it was women and women's organisations who made it possible for people like Dr King to do what they did.

"Women also played an historical and important role in the defiance campaigns in the US in the 1950's. But our history books haven't recorded their role."

Comrade Angela said she believed South African organisations and women's organisations could learn more from the mistakes organisations in the US have made than from their victories.

"You could perhaps avoid making some of the mistakes



Picture: Dynamic Images

we have made," she said.

"But I believe there is a lot more that organisations in the US can learn from people in South Africa than the other way around.

"Already progressive organisations in the US have been inspired by the commitment of people involved in the South African struggle.

"At the moment South Africa is the hope of many of us in the world. While, for example, socialism seems to be collapsing in some parts of the world, here there is hope

for establishing a socialist society.

"We understand though that it is a difficult and complex time and we will try to be with you all in a militant and dramatic way as you move through this time of trying to create a non-racial, non-sexist, democratic South Africa.

"Sexism and racism are all around all of us and they must be purged not only from the structures of society, but also from the hearts of the people."✪



Picture: DIP of ANC

Comrade Gertrude Shope

Karen Hurt of SPEAK interviewed Comrade Shope, President of the African National Congress Women's League and a member of the ANC National Executive Committee .

Comrade Gertrude Shope is a woman with very little time for herself. When she does manage to squeeze in a little time to relax, what
SPEAK

does she like to do?

She laughs at this question. "It is very, very difficult to get free time."

But when she does?

"I enjoy having my family members visiting me, or if I can I visit them. I love cooking very much. My husband cooks a lot. I enjoy listening to choral music."

What are her favourite colours?

No surprise - black, green and gold.

And what was the happiest moment of her life?

February 2 1990, of course, she says, when the organisations of the people were unbanned. She was in exile in Zamibia at the time.

How did she feel?

"Oh my goodness! Some people came into the office and said: 'You are still in the office? The ANC has been unbanned!' But we said: 'It means more work now the ANC is unbanned.' Of course we all remained in the office but we were all very happy ... of course it meant we were going home and this we have always looked forward to."

Comrade Shope said the unbannings mean "more work now". What does this mean with regard to women in South Africa?

Women have been left out of politics and this must change, believes Comrade Shope. She believes women have skills to bring to politics. She said: "Women's skills have not been used enough in the country, especially during the violence. Women have the ability to bring together a family under one roof. Therefore they have a bigger role to play in bringing together this big nation of ours."

"Women have been put to the very back. They are not seen as people who can make a contribution."

One of the biggest problems facing women in the struggle is the attitude from men. Men have a lot to learn from the way women handle things. "It is through listening to women that men are going to understand what women are all about," said Comrade Shope.

Workshops and discussions where women and men discuss these things can and do help to change men's attitudes. Comrade Shope remembers a workshop held in December 1989 in Lusaka to discuss 'Women, children and the family'.

"It was to discuss the emancipation of women versus the family and the nation. This meeting came about at the instruction of our (then) president Mr Oliver Tambo. Men helped in preparing documents for the meeting. Some of them chaired the commissions. They actually played a role in quite a number of things. This helped a lot because it made some of the men change their minds about women. We made them understand that we were not trying to compete with them, but simply striving for a balanced society."

Black and white women should come together to look at all the cultural practices and traditions that hold them back, says Comrade Shope. She believes that women must break the barriers that keep them apart. She says women would be surprised to find how much they have in common.

"It helps a lot if different groups are together because they will be able to exchange views, share experiences, ask questions and respond," she said.

Comrade Shope believes that the ANCWL will build up membership of women of different races and classes through arranging meetings between women of different races, classes, religious and political beliefs.

"ANC women should not shun invitations from organisations of other races," she said "for instance we attended an IDASA (Institute for Democratic Alternatives in South Africa) meeting in a white suburb. We ended up recruiting two members for the Women's League."

Comrade Shope's message to young South African women is clear and simple: "Every minute that ticks means one more day in history. Young women should make sure they live every day fruitfully. They should make use of every opportunity they find. They should go to school and learn to get whatever knowledge is going to help them. In the end, it is not only going to help them but the nation as a whole. The standard of any nation is judged on the health of the people. And secondly it is judged on the capabilities of the people, which includes women." ☺



Johannesburg anti-VAT march September 1991. Picture : DIP of ANC

CAMPAIGN AGAINST VAT

Tens of thousands of South Africans took to the streets recently to protest the introduction by the government of Value Added Tax (VAT).

The government brought in VAT without talking to unions or organisations which represent the majority of people. This is another example of the Nationalist Party's double-face. On one hand it pretends to negotiate about power, but on the other it keeps making major power decisions by

itself.

But workers and the people of South Africa are saying they won't put up with this anymore.

Poor people have been struggling to survive for a long time. The introduction of VAT on all food and on services makes their struggle harder. Many more people won't be able to afford to feed themselves, clothe themselves or house themselves. More street protests against VAT are



**A banner shouting for women's rights at the Johannesburg anti-VAT march
Picture : DIP of ANC**

being planned and the union movement has called for a two day stayaway for November 4 and 5 1991.

COSATU general secretary Jay Naidoo says the stayaway "will be the biggest stayaway in South Africa's history".

COSATU, NACTU and several non-aligned worker bodies say they will call off the strike if big business

and the government meet their demands. These demands include:

- *No VAT on basic foods, water, electricity, medicines and medical services;
- *Talks about how to help the poor people in South Africa so they don't suffer more because of VAT;
- *Protection of small businesses; and
- *An end to government and big business' attempts to restructure the economy without consultation. ☛

DANGER!

NIGHTSHIFT

A SACCAWU member was recently murdered after trying to get back home after working a late shift in a restaurant. Many other workers who work shifts face attacks when trying to get home late at night. Libby Lloyd looks at the issue of guaranteed safe transport home for night shift workers.

At 11.30pm on Saturday 6 July 1991, 27-year-old Stella Mabale finished her shift at a fast-food restaurant in Rustenburg.

Her boss gave her a lift, but he didn't take her home. Instead he dropped her at about 12.30pm at the last robot out of Rustenburg on the way to Sun City. Stella had to stand alone, in the dark, and try to make her own way home from there.

Stella never got home. She was raped and then murdered. Her body was found early on Sunday morning by the Bophuthatswana police.

No-one will ever know what exactly happened to Stella, but we can all imagine her terror. We can imagine how alone and scared she felt when she was left on the side of that road in the dark. We can imagine the fear she felt when she was attacked.

We all also know Stella shouldn't have died in this way. She had a right to expect to get home safely, and her bosses should have made sure she did. No-one's life should be at risk because of the job they do or the hours they work.

Bosses often seem not to care about such things. Sometimes it seems as if they think workers' lives are cheap.

Stella's co-workers found out three days after her murder that no one had bothered to tell her family of her death.

When workers took two days off to help her family prepare for her funeral and to attend the burial, they were fired. The bosses said they

were not relatives so did not need to help.

Stella's rape and murder is the extreme outcome of no guaranteed safe transport home, but many workers risk being robbed or attacked because their workplaces do not provide transport. Now, when so many of our people are being killed in the violence in our country, the dangers are even greater. Women workers are especially open to attack if they try to get home alone late at night.

At the moment the law does not say anything about safe transport home for people who work night shift. There is nothing forcing bosses to provide transport home for these workers. Stella's boss therefore did not break any law when he dropped her off at that robot after midnight.

What are the unions doing about this?

Stella's murder has sparked her union, the South African Commercial, Catering and Allied Workers Union (SACCAWU), to seriously campaign for safe transport home for night workers.

Many workers in restaurants and small fast food shops work night shift, and many of them do not have assured safe transport home.

Saccawu has written to all the take away chain companies which employ people at night to ask them whether they provide workers with transport home.

In a letter to the bosses they wrote: "this is not



Women night workers. Guaranteed safe transport home at night should be part of the law

Picture : Dynamic Images

an issue to be left to annual negotiations, it is pressing and requires immediate attention. Safety is a basic human right which no employer can ignore."

Many of the companies did not even bother to reply. Some of the big chain companies that did answer, said they did not deal with such issues. They said the union must speak to each of the fast-food restaurants under them, as they are each individually managed.

SACCAWU organiser Alan Horwitz said this proves safe transport home for night shift workers is mostly not guaranteed.

"We have now started publicising this demand within the union and we will be taking it to Cosatu. Many of our members have reported being attacked or robbed while trying to get home alone at night. This is a serious issue, but

unfortunately it is probably up to the women within unions to make sure that it is taken up seriously. We need to start safety-at-night campaigns."

Patricia Appollis is the national co-ordinator of women in SACCAWU. SPEAK spoke to her about the demands.

"SACCAWU has now decided to launch a campaign around this," she said, "but it will definitely be left to the women to push this demand in the union. Men don't take it seriously and other issues get made into priorities. It is an important campaign that should be taken up nationally. It doesn't only affect the women in the union, it affects everyone.

"We are in the process of setting up women's forums in the union and this campaign will be one of the things we will have to discuss in these

DANGER ! **NIGHTSHIFT**

forums."

Transport and General Workers Union also has members who work late at night. Cleaners often start their shift after everyone else has gone home, and security guards also work night shifts.

SPEAK asked the assistant general secretary of TGWU, Randall Howard, whether they face similar problems.

"The majority of companies do not provide guaranteed safe transport home," he said. "Our members working these night shifts have told us about the danger of getting home and have talked about their worries. Women in particular face all kinds of danger when they try to get home late at night."

He said TGWU had recognised that guaranteed safe transport home was an important demand to campaign for.

"At the moment though, although this always comes up as one of our demands during negotiations, we have not launched a specific campaign on this demand.

"This definitely needs to be taken up more seriously," he admitted.

At the Cosatu Congress this year the union federation committed itself to campaigning for safe and adequate transport for night shift workers and for people doing overtime. So far though it does not seem as if there has been a specific campaign launched around this demand.

Bosses who employ people at night have a duty to make sure their workers get home safely. Guaranteed safe transport home for people forced to work night shift should be part of any new labour law in South Africa. This demand is not only a "women's" demand - both men and women face attack. It should not be left to the women to make sure this is treated seriously within unions.

Stella shouldn't have died. All of us should take up this campaign to make sure no more workers are murdered because of the hours they work. ☺

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September 8 International Literacy Day

"People like us who cannot read and write are like prisoners. We depend on other people for help. A lot is happening around us, but we feel cheated because we are kept in the dark."

There are nine million adults in South Africa who are "kept in the dark" because they cannot read and write. That means nine million people who cannot read this article and nine million people who cannot write to tell us about their frustrations.

On 8 September people all over the world celebrated International Literacy Day and focused on the problems of those who cannot read and write. In South Africa this day was also marked to remind us all of the problems of adult education in our country.

The government in South Africa does not seem to see this problem as a major one. It spends only one percent of the national education budget on adult basic education. This is far too little and literacy learners are demanding that the government and employers take their problems seriously.

Here are some of their demands:

- * The government must spend more money on adult basic education. It should increase

spending from one percent to 25 percent of the education budget;

- * Classrooms for adult learners should be built in the suburbs, in the townships and in the workplaces. These classrooms should have proper equipment;

- * Learners should be given paid time off to study;

- * Employers must give money to adult education;

- * Libraries should keep literacy books;

- * Special attention should be paid to women learners to make it possible for them to learn, for example safe transport at night.

COSATU is also looking at ways to fight for the right of adults to education. It is demanding that the bosses help workers to get basic education. COSATU wants trade unions to plan and run adult basic education programmes which would be paid for by the government and the employers.

We would like to thank English Literacy Project (ELP) for information they gave us to write this article.

FOOTPRINTS OF SORROW

Women in Guatemala

This is the story of Rosalina Tuyuc, the leader of the Widow's Committee, CONAVIGUA, in Guatemala - a country in Latin America.

Rosalina smiles a lot as she opens the morning post in her busy office. But when she is asked about her own life, she becomes sad. "My children often ask where their father is," she says. "I see them looking at other kids in the street who walk with their parents. Sometimes they think he is with another woman. I find it difficult to tell them he was killed by the army." Rosalina was born in a small village called Comalapa. "In my village we were very poor," she says. "I went to school for four years, but after that there was no more money. I always wanted to be a teacher or a doctor so as to be able to help my community. But at 15 I had to start work as a domestic servant in a house in the main town.

"When I was 16 I began working with the church. We would go out to the villages at weekends. I saw there the real needs of the people. In the church I started a literacy class.

"Then in 1979 and 1980 the repression came. Many people were killed and kidnapped. No one could go out from 6pm to 6am. Fifteen or 20 bodies were found every day, killed by the army. I continued working with the church, but we couldn't have any meetings; there was no organisation. We were filled with terror.

"In 1982 the soldiers kidnapped my father. We were distraught. Life has no economic price, you can't buy the love of a father. I couldn't understand the reason why this had happened...

Rosalina Tuyuc, the leader of the widow's committee. Her husband and father have disappeared.



"In 1985 they disappeared my husband. You feel this is a test. We know who is doing it: the army. Sometimes we see them on the streets, dragging a man away. When the soldiers pass through our communities they leave footprints of sorrow.

"After they killed my husband I had to support two children. I worked selling vegetables. For years we were very poor.

"In the market I began to meet other widows. Some were organised in groups doing weaving, others were alone. We thought about getting together. The churches helped us form CONAVIGUA.

"At the first meeting I didn't want to be a leader. After they killed my father and husband I said I'd never be a leader again. I felt very guilty about my father - he had never done anything, it was I who was active. They killed him because of my work.

"But there was a vote, and all the women wanted me, so I had to stand. There weren't

many women who could read and write. Also, in Guatemala even if you're not active they still persecute you. So why not join in. I said I would help and was elected president."

CONVIGUA is an organisation for women to fight for their rights and to fight against the violence in the country. But women in the

organisation also teach each other skills and teach other how to read and write.

"It is very good now in CONAVIGUA. We are learning a lot. One friend is 88 and she comes to meetings. She said to me: 'In all my years no-one ever listened to my opinions. Here they do.

You youngsters are teaching us how to organise'.

"We must all participate. We have all suffered but the only road is to be united. I have got over the loss of my husband now and try to think about the future, although it is difficult at times. Last month it was father's day and all the kids at school made cards. Mine came home and had no-one to give them to, so they gave them to the man next door. That hurts." ☺

This article was taken from Oxfam's Gender and Development Unit Newspank No 13.

The Widow's Committee was launched three years ago. They organise and help to educate women who have suffered from political violence in their country.

Many people in Guatemala have suffered because of government repression. Most of the people in the country are Mayan Indians, but the rulers of the country are people whose ancestors came from Spain in Europe. Most of the people are very poor, and a few rich people own most of the land.

In 1954 the army seized power in the country and since then more than 40 000 Guatemalans have 'disappeared'. Between 1981 and 1983 over 30 000 people were killed. Although in 1986 the army no longer ruled the country and a civilian government got into power, the killings in Guatemala still continue. Rosalina has also been threatened by death squads and one of the leaders of the organisation, CONVIGUA, has been killed.

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Shamim Meer spoke to Kate Truscott, head of the Women's
Commission of the Worker's Organisation For Socialist Action
(WOSA)

WOSA on Women

SPEAK: Can you tell us about WOSA?

Kate: We think WOSA is the only independent socialist organisation in South Africa. We see ourselves as part of the broad liberation movement, but because we are a socialist organisation we can put the interests and position of the working class without compromising them. We see the national liberation movement as vague on worker issues. WOSA is an anti-capitalist, pro-working class, socialist organisation.

SPEAK: When was WOSA formed?

Kate: In March 1990 various socialist organisations came together to form WOSA. Organisations like Cape Action League, Action Youth, Students of Young Azania, people from exile, people who had been on Robben Island and socialists who had been active in trade unions and other organisations.

When organisations were unbanned in February last year it seemed the right time to set up an organisation of socialists. WOSA membership at present is about 500 to 600.

SPEAK: How is WOSA structured?

Kate: We have had two national conferences. Conference is the ultimate decision-making body. It elects a central committee made up of a general secretary, national chair, national vice-chair, national treasurer, national organiser, editor of our newspaper Vukani Basabenzi,

editor of our Journal (Worker's Voice) and heads of commissions on labour, women, youth, education. Branches are organised regionally, and branches have working groups.

SPEAK: What activities has WOSA undertaken?

Kate: Our orientation is towards building the mass movement. We work at two levels. We encourage members to work in their civics, student organisations, trade union organisations, and we encourage those structures to be as non-sectarian and democratic as possible because we see these as the most important formations in which working class interests can be advanced. These mass structures must be open to all, because civics or unions that are aligned have led to violent sectarianism in some cases.

We work through various political campaigns. For example, we are strong promoters of the constituent assembly campaign as this offers the most democratic form for oppressed people of South Africa to express their ideas about the new South Africa. We are not in favour of an interim government. We did not sign the Peace Accord because we think the state is using the Accord to restructure what is happening in communities prior to a democratic settlement process taking place. If De Klerk was really serious about peaceful transition he would work harder to put a constituent assembly in place. We want peace, but we don't think the Peace Accord will bring peace.



Kate Truscott : It is very important to combine feminism and socialism.

Picture : Libby Lloyd, SPEAK

It is similar to VAT. De Klerk wants to restructure the economy prior to a democratic process taking place. This is out of order and will set back the process of restructuring the economy. Our position on this is the same as COSATU. WOSA is a small organisation. We raise our position wherever we are active, as a way of focusing attention on key political issues and campaigns.

SPEAK: Can you tell us about WOSA's position on women?

Kate: The Women's Commission is still being

consolidated. We try to formulate a political position on women's oppression in South Africa, and we try to work with other women in a united front way.

It is only recently that there is space for something called socialist feminism. It is similar with socialism - only recently there has been space to separate socialism from national liberation politics.

We are not hostile to national liberation. This is where people's experience of class takes place. It may be seen as black and white but many demands of working class people are socialist. It is the same with women. Women are not happy with what's happening to them. Women are unhappy about the violence against women, about rape, their lack of political power. This can't be reduced to anti-apartheid struggle and women know this. The problem is how to nurture that latent feminism experienced by a large number of women and make it a fighting consciousness capable of taking on male domination in a way that brings men with us. We don't mean to alienate men in the movement, but they need education.

It is very important to combine feminism and socialism.

At a WOSA meeting to be held soon we will propose that we do joint campaigning work with women of other organisations.

My own view is that we need an independent women's movement in this country. We think women's demands can best be taken up in a mass-based women's movement where women will get together to make mass-based campaigns on women's issues. This will be more effective than each women's organisation within other structures making demands.

Women's oppression is so overwhelming. A women's movement can offer a support system, solidarity and sisterhood to encourage women to identify issues and move into struggle to take these up. ☺

HOW THE UNION CHANGED MY LIFE

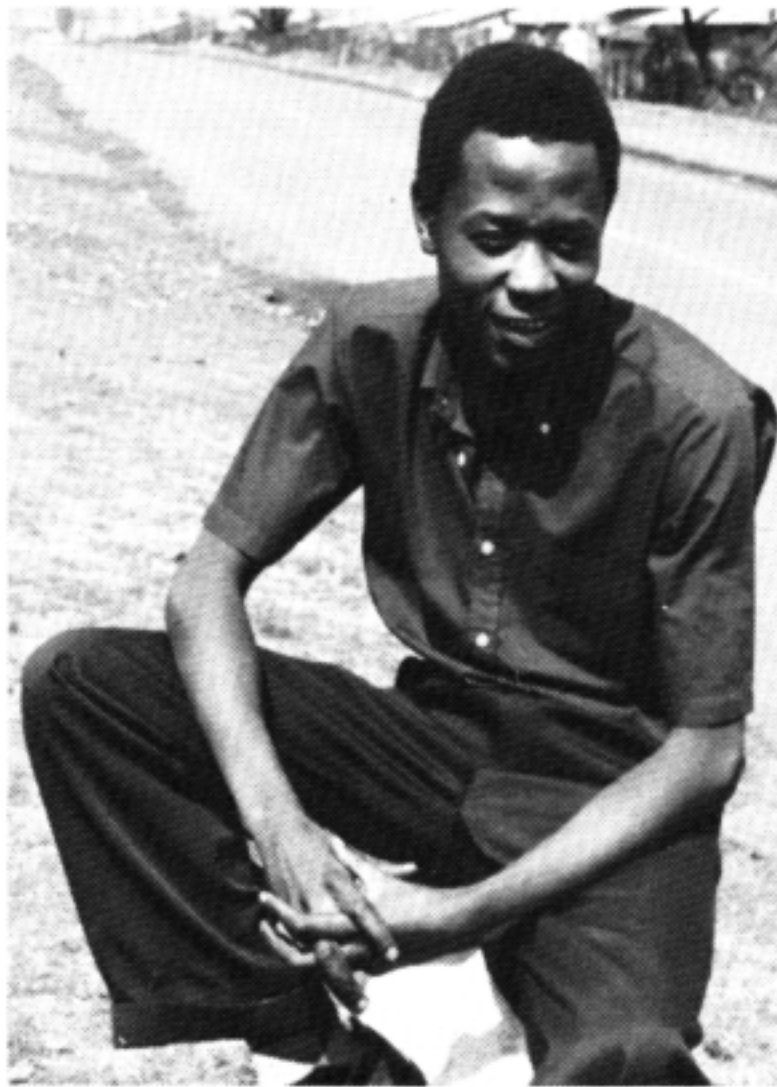
Morgan Gomati, a shopsteward with the Food and Allied Workers Union (FAWU) in Transvaal, talks about his views on women, about sexism in the union and in the community, and about how the union changed his life.

Comrade Morgan has been involved in the union for about seven years. He says the union has taught him many things - and he doesn't just mean about labour law and workers rights. He says since joining the union he has also changed his views about women.

"Before I had a negative attitude and believed that a man's word was final and women cannot debate it. Since joining the union though I have changed a lot.

"For example I have had to realise that I can't talk about democracy and then say that the man's word is final. When women talk in the union we respect them as fellow comrades.

"Before being involved in the unions I believed in tradition but being with the union has changed that altogether."



***Comrade Morgan Gomati -
Men must do something to
help women to be free.***

Comrade Morgan says this change in thinking has also had an effect on his home life. He is married and has three children. He says he hasn't, like some 'comrades', turned into a new man at work but stayed a tyrant in his home. "Before I would never have stayed and looked after the children while their

mother went off shopping, but now I take that seriously. Now I realise that child-care is a parents issue, not a women's issue."

His wife is not working as she has to look after their father who is staying with them.

"I think it is unfortunate that she had to give up work," he says. "I would have been happy for her to have been active in her union. I'd be very happy if she was as involved as I am. We would have been able to find an answer to problems like child-care."

He says, though, that his wife often helps him sort out problems he is having. When he comes home he discusses any problems with her. Her opinions and views often help him come up with a position that he takes back to the union.

Comrade Morgan admits

that not all male union members are like him. Some men still don't accept women as equals.

"One of the problems is relationships between men and women in the union," he says. "This problem is not widespread, but we have tended to forget our code of conduct. If union officials have affairs with women in the union it often causes a problem. I know of one woman comrade from a certain factory who gave false reasons for not coming to a meeting. She didn't want to come because a certain person who she had been involved with was also at the meeting. These personal problems can become major union problems"

He says that sometimes as well male comrades don't take women union members seriously.

"It happens at times that we don't listen to our women comrades when they raise serious issues affecting them. One area where we don't listen is the issue of salaries. Women comrades are often paid less than the male comrades and though they complain about this it's not addressed wholeheartedly. If it were addressed wholeheartedly, something would have been done by now.

"But it is changing. Before if a woman began to speak, men would begin speaking to their

other comrades, ignoring her. Now mostly men listen to women and when they don't they soon realise that she had an important point and they should have debated it."

But, Comrade Morgan says, men who are not part of unions or democratic organisations are more often worse than those who are organised.

"If we look at the community you find that those who aren't organised often believe a woman is a second-class citizen. They quote from the bible and say that women were made from men. They must still realise that women are equal to men. Women can reason and debate as well as men and can do things that men do just as well. A campaign needs to be launched against men who oppress women."

Comrade Morgan says though he believes that women are often too quiet about their problems and don't fight for their rights enough. He says: "Sometimes women do not participate wholeheartedly. They think they are inferior to male comrades and they feel shy to stand up and challenge issues. Some women also still believe that they must get instructions from male comrades."

But Comrade Morgan does admit that there are other reasons for women not always

participating in unions fully. "Fear is another thing that prevents participation. Often women are afraid of facing violence in the streets after leaving a meeting so they don't go.

"Men are also a problem because they oppress our comrades in the home and don't allow them to go to meetings."

How does Comrade Morgan think all these problems can be solved?

"We must educate people about these problems. Maybe civic associations can discuss things like fear and violence against women.

"Women must also raise their voices and demand an end to oppression. They must address the shyness of our comrades.

"But it will be a problem if only women take up these issues. We as men must also do something to help end this oppression. Culture and tradition sometimes ensure that women are treated as nothing and we must do away with that. We as men must do something to help women to be free."☺

This interview with Comrade Morgan was done by Tammy Schefer from LACOM for a book by LACOM, SPEAK and COSATU, called No Turning Back. This book will be out by the end of this year.

DISABLED WOMEN - A FIGHTING FORCE!

Disabled people aren't the problem - other people's attitudes are. That's the powerful message from Maria Rantho, the deputy chairperson of Disabled People South Africa. Bobby Rodwell spoke to her.

"Disability is not a health issue, it is a political issue!" said Maria Rantho of Disabled People of South Africa (DPSA).

"Disabled people aren't sick. They want to take up their normal place in the society. If we look at disability as a health issue, we fail to look at the serious political issues that need to be addressed."

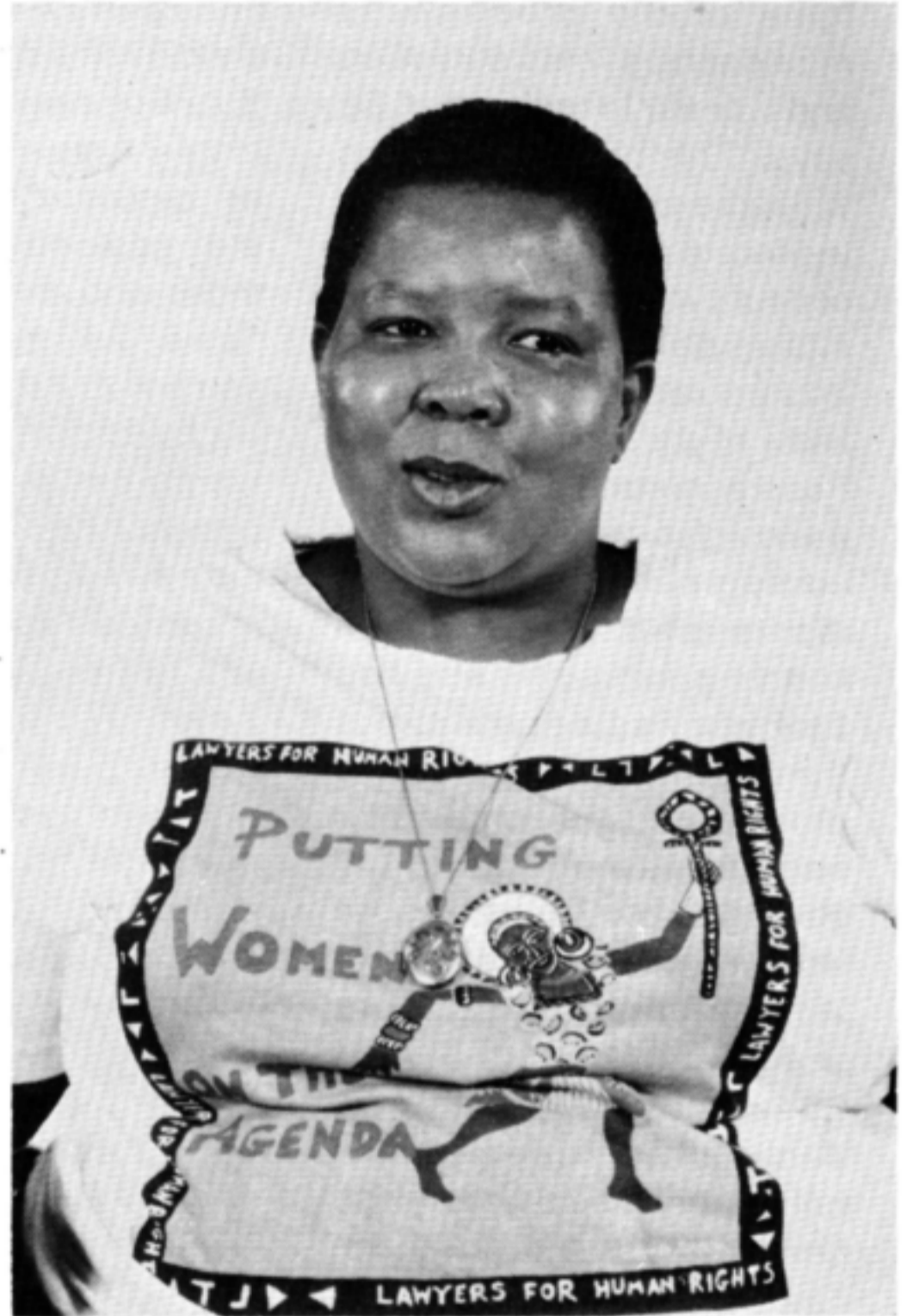
Maria herself is in a wheelchair, and she says disabled people's problems are ignored in South Africa.

"There is absolutely no law in South Africa that protects disabled people - not for the workplace, for recreational facilities or medical facilities," she said. "Also, buildings are not built with disabled people in mind. Very few buildings have rails or ramps so that a disabled person can get around without the help of an abled person."

"These are the rights we are fighting for so that we can lead normal lives."

What does disabled mean?

SPEAK asked Maria what people mean when they call a person disabled. She explained to us a disabled person is someone who is not able to do things the same way as other people because of a physical or other problem. They might be blind, or need to use a wheelchair. DPSA represents people who have disabilities of "sight, hearing, movement, speech or



Maria Rantho : Disability is a political issue!

Picture : Jacob Fourie

intellect". Sometimes people are born with disabilities, and sometimes people are disabled because of accidents.

This does not mean that they are not "normal" as some people think.

"That is what angers us," she said. "People look at us and want us to live our lives as they want us to. We can live normal lives - but in our own way."



All work that can be done from a wheelchair we are able to do. That's the slogan for Self-help Association of Disabled Alexandra (Shadax) - one of the many self-help projects that are members of DPSA. Shadax was started three years ago. Here we can see women at work. Apartheid has made it harder for many people with disabilities - far more money is spent on white disabled people than on black people with disabilities.

Picture : Bobby Rodwell

The effects on women

Maria told us she is particularly concerned with the rights of disabled women. She said the majority of members of DPSA are women, and that these women are particularly discriminated against.

"Disabled women are often seen as asexual (as if they are without sex). Somehow people seem

to think that just because someone has a physical handicap, she does not have the same needs as any other women.

"We also often hear of cases where doctors have sterilised disabled women without their consent - as if they have no rights over their own body. It is as if a disabled person does not know or have control over her body."

Maria told us she has also faced such discrimination.

"When I fell pregnant with my child, after planning to have a baby, the doctors who I saw treated me as if I had been naughty!

"Here I was, a fully grown woman who chose to have a child and I was being treated as if I was a naughty girl for falling pregnant. It is that kind of insult that women with disabilities experience almost on a daily basis.

"Women who are disabled are often seen as stupid. This does not only happen within families but also in the community. We have to make people aware that physical disability does not mean that a person cannot think for herself!

"You see," Maria explained, "women in our society are oppressed. Women with disabilities are oppressed even more. While women generally are treated as inferior, disabled women are treated as if they are not even proper women. Their rights are of great concern to DPSA."

The activities of DPSA

We asked Maria more about the organisation she works for. The first thing she told us is that they are demanding "self determination". She said this means they do not want academics or other able people standing up and speaking for them. Disabled people will speak for themselves. DPSA is "an organisation of organisations". Disabled people organise themselves into local self help groups and these groups come together in DPSA. Ten thousand people are members of DPSA through these self help groups and there are member organisations in the rural areas and the cities.

Non-disabled people are also members of the organisation, but they do not have a vote and

Disabled Women
A Fighting Force

cannot stand for positions within the organisation. DPSA has links with both international and African organisations for people with physical disabilities.

SPEAK asked Maria how many people are disabled in South Africa.

"Well it is believed that 10 percent of any population is disabled. That means in South Africa it can be anything up to 300 000 people," she said.

"Disabled people are often hidden from society. For example, if a family has a disabled child, they may be embarrassed and keep the child at home. Often the child will not be able to go to school. There are still a lot of people who believe a disabled child is a bad omen!

"That is why illiteracy is very high amongst disabled people."

Maria said DPSA is fighting so that disabled people will be able to enjoy life the same way as other people.

"We do not want separate schools for disabled people. Disabled people should go to ordinary schools that will best equip them to cope within the broader society.

"We want people with disabilities to come out into the open and address life as normal human beings - which is exactly what they are!

"We consider that to be the most important aspect of our work. We run workshops and



Woman at work at Shadax. Projects such as Shadax have been launched by disabled people in many communities. Picture : Bobby Rodwell

seminars to conscientise people."

One of the ways DPSA tries to do this is by helping disabled people to become financially independent.

"DPSA has many organisations that are members of our body. We work together with them to create self-help programmes for disabled people to help them become more financially independent."

Disabled People in the future South Africa

Maria said the problems of disabled people must not be forgotten while we fight for human rights in our country.

The United Nations has declared 1983 - 1992 the Decade of Disabled People and in South Africa we should try to create awareness of the problems disabled people face.

"Human rights means rights for all humans!" she said. "Everyone must be allowed to lead a normal life, and we as disabled women are fighting for this right. That is why we say that disability is not a health issue, it is a political issue!" ♣

If you or someone you know would like to get more information about disabled people or about organisations for disabled people in your area you can write to: Disabled People South Africa, P.O. Box 39008, Booyens, 2016, or telephone (011) 982-1130.

You can also telephone Maria Rantho at (012) 5293264.

They will put you in contact with a local branch or a self-help organisation in your area.

CYSTITIS

Even if you have never heard the word cystitis before, most women will know how it feels to have this problem.

If you suddenly have to pass water every few minutes, and if when you go to the toilet it burns like crazy but almost nothing comes out, you probably have cystitis. Sometimes when you have cystitis your urine is mixed with blood and you might get pain low down in your stomach.

What is cystitis?

Cystitis is an infection of the bladder. Most women get it at least once during their life.

The bladder is the bag that stores urine before you go to the toilet. Urine is made up of waste matter. This waste is taken out of our blood in the kidneys. The urine passes from the kidneys to the bladder where it is stored. It then passes down the urethra (the small passage between the bladder and the outside) when you pass water. (See diagram).

When germs get into the bladder you get the infection called cystitis.

This is not a serious problem but it must be treated or the infection may spread to your kidneys. Kidney infection can be serious.

If the infection carries on for more than two days, if it comes back often, or if you have a pain in your back and feel very shivery and sick, you may have a kidney infection. You must go to your clinic or doctor immediately.

What causes cystitis?

Usually, cystitis is caused by germs getting into the bladder from the outside. Sometimes though the germs are spread from the kidneys to the bladder.

There are different ways in which these germs

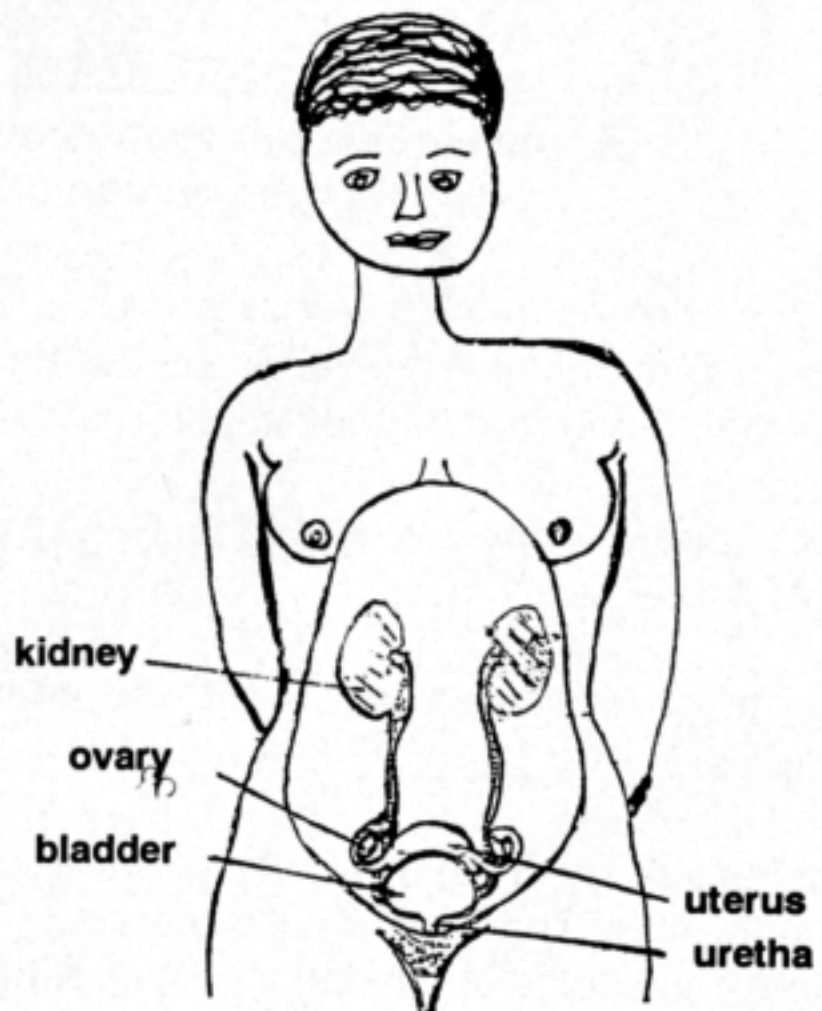
get into the bladder from the outside:

* These germs may get into the bladder when a woman wipes herself after going to the toilet. This is more likely to happen if she wipes herself from back to front.

* Cystitis may also start after making love - particularly if the woman has had sex more than once. This is often called "honeymoon cystitis". The man's penis rubs on the opening of the passage that leads to the bladder and allows germs to pass up to the bladder.

This might also happen if the woman does not really feel like sex and is dry during intercourse. Some women find that they get cystitis every time they have sex. This is a big problem for them because it is uncomfortable.

* Some types of birth control also sometimes lead to an attack of cystitis. Some women find that diaphragms press against the urethra and cause infections.



HEALTH

How is cystitis treated?

If you get cystitis mildly you can start off by treating yourself at home. If you are pregnant though you should not try treating yourself. Infections in the bladder in pregnancy can become very serious.

If you are treating yourself, the most important thing to do is to drink lots of water so that the germs are flushed out of the bladder. You should drink a glass of water about every twenty minutes.

You can also buy citrus soda from the chemist. This makes the urine less acid and stops it stinging so much. Mix two teaspoons of the citrus soda with half a glass of cold water. Take this at least three times a day.

If you can't get citrus soda, you can mix a teaspoon of bicarbonate of soda into a glass of orange juice and drink the mixture. You should drink this every hour for three hours. This also makes your wee less acid.

Remember though, that although citrus soda and the orange juice/bicarb mixture might make you feel better, they DO NOT kill the germs. You should try to do these self-help treatments as soon as you feel an attack of cystitis

If the cystitis doesn't clear up after two days of

treating yourself or if the infection keeps coming back, you should go as soon as possible to your local clinic or doctor. You should also go to your clinic or doctor if you are pregnant, if you have a fever and shivering attacks or back pain.

The health worker who sees you will want to test your urine. She will give you a bottle and ask you to pass some urine into the toilet first, and then to catch the middle part of your wee in the bottle. This will be tested with a coloured strip, which tells the health worker whether there is infection in the urine or not.

If you are very sick, or if you have had cystitis many times before, your urine will be sent away to the laboratory so that they can find out which germs are causing the problem. After this you will be given antibiotic tablets to take which will kill the germs and clear the infection.

If you do get a lot of cystitis, if you are pregnant, or if you get pain in your kidneys (in your lower back) with cystitis, you may need to have more tests to make sure that your kidneys have not been damaged by the germs that are giving you cystitis. You may need to be on antibiotic tablets for several weeks to stop the germs from coming back.

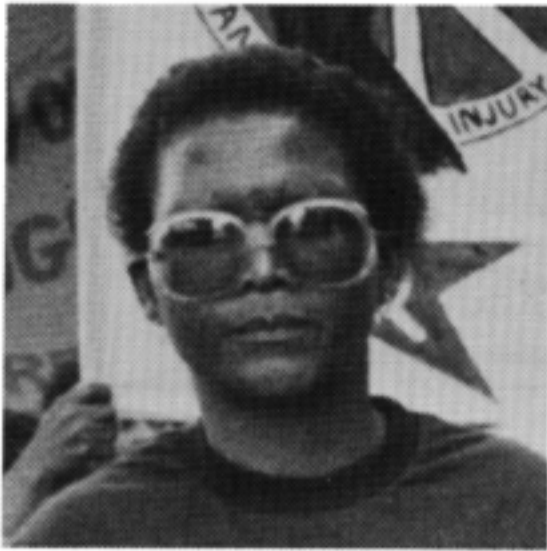
Cystitis itself is not a serious problem, but if it spreads to your kidneys it can become serious.☹

Some Ways to Prevent Cystitis

Some women get cystitis over and over again. There are some easy things you can do to try and stop these attacks.

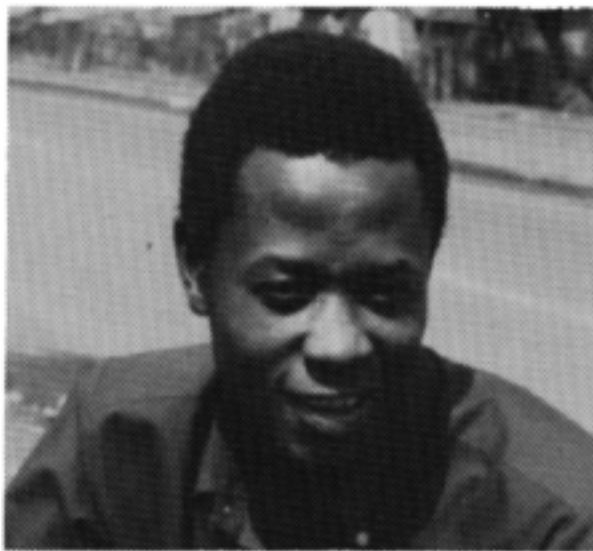
1. Try to drink as much water as possible. If you drink a lot of liquids the germs are flushed out of the bladder before they cause cystitis.
2. Try to pee whenever you need to. Don't try to hold it in.
3. Try to pass water both before and after having sex.
4. During sex, try not to do anything that feels uncomfortable. Try to work out if there are particular positions of making love that bring on a cystitis attack.
5. Stop germs getting into your bladder after going to the toilet by wiping from front to back, not from back to front.
6. If you have recently started using a diaphragm and you find that it is irritating you and you are getting cystitis attacks, see the person that fitted you with this prevention. Sometimes a different size diaphragm may help.
7. Keep yourself as healthy as possible. If you are healthy you are less likely to get infections like cystitis.

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