



# H R C BULLETIN

3

august 9 1975

In this issue the Human Rights Committee salute the women of South Africa who have struggled, and still struggle, for freedom.

This year, 1975, has been designated as International Women's Year by the United Nations.

Here we commemorate August 9, which has been designated Women's Day in South Africa -- the anniversary of a demonstration by 20 000 women of all races at the seat of white government at the Union Buildings in Pretoria in 1956.

Women of South Africa have died, gone to prison, been widowed, house-arrested, banned and listed.

We, the Human Rights Committee, pay tribute to the heroism of them all, known and unknown.

In this issue we can unfortunately mention only examples of the involvement of women in the struggle and only a few of the individuals ....

# FEDERATION OF WOMEN

The Federation of South African Women was formed to unite women in the fight to end discrimination against them as women, and as black women - in work and in society.

The movement began in 1954 when 78 leading women, black and white, signed a letter of invitation calling on women all over the country to attend a conference to promote women's rights. Hundreds of women attended the conference, held at Johannesburg's Trades Hall in April 1954, at which the Federation was formed.

It was the first women's organisation in South Africa to bring together women of the various racial groups on the basis of full equality and full co-operation in one undivided organisation. The moving spirits behind the inaugural conference and the birth of the Federation were Ray Alexander and Ida Mntwana, who became the first National President.

"Forward to freedom, security, equal rights and peace for all."

This was the slogan of that first conference, although the women who attended were very conscious of the need for a women's organisation that would also unite and organise women in the struggle for national liberation and the fight against racial discrimination and oppression.

In South Africa the fundamental struggle of the people is the struggle for national liberation, and the women of the Federation realised that any women's organisation that stood outside this struggle would stand apart from the mass of the women.

After the conference the women set out to organise the provinces into regions of the Federation.

It grew steadily in numbers and influence. The women of the national liberation organisations and a few of the trades unions affiliated. There was no individual membership.

Inevitably the Federation developed politically in the context of the liberation struggle, with its main strength coming from the ANC Women's League. However, the Federation always preserved its multi-racial character.

Regional conferences of the Federation were called regularly to discuss and protest against day-to-day issues concerning women, especially as mothers, for example: Bantu Education, Group Areas, rent increases, the pass system.

These protests culminated in the epic struggle of the women of the Federation and the Women's League against the issuing of passes to African Women, and the famous August 9 demonstration in Pretoria.

# PRETORIA

# DEMO

August 9th, 1956 stands out as one of the proudest dates for the women of South Africa in their struggle for freedom and human rights.

It was on this day that more than 20 000 women of all races and from all over the Republic gathered at the seat of Government at the Union Buildings in Pretoria to demand the withdrawal of passes for women and the repeal of the Pass Laws.

It was the day when the men stayed home to tend the children and the women went onto the offensive en masse.

Organised by the Federation of South African Women, the demonstrators were mobilised in the face of tremendous difficulties and harrassment.

One of their slogans - "Strijdom you have struck a rock, you have touched the women!" -- describes the spirit and the outrage that inspired the demonstration.

The protest was called by the Transvaal branch of the Federation, and branches throughout the country were asked to send members. The demands were directed to the Prime Minister, Strijdom.

The women answered the call, and arrived by train, coach and car. There were contingents from as far away as Cape Town, Durban, Port Elizabeth and Bloemfontein. Country districts were also represented.

A ban on the proposed public meeting and march failed to deter the women, and they converged on the capital city on schedule.

They were forbidden to march - but that didn't stop them from wending their way to the Union Buildings in groups of two and three, separated by five or six paces.

The 20 000 women massed around the statue of Louis Botha in the gardens of the Union Buildings and awaited their leaders. When they arrived, the crowd - many carrying young children on their backs - fell in behind them and walked to the amphitheatre. In the amphitheatre all the signed protests were collected and given to the leaders.

The leaders, who included Lilian Ngoyi, Helen Joseph, Sophie Williams, Rahima Moosa and Francis Baard delivered the demands to the Prime Minister's office - Strijdom was out - while the women waited outside.

to page six

## bram memorial

The Human Rights Committee mourns the passing of Bram Fischer, son of Africa, who died on 8 May and was cremated in Bloemfontein within one week, on orders of the Minister of Prisons.

Two weeks after his death, the HRC held a memorial meeting to pay tribute. At the Gandhi Hall in Fox Street, Johannesburg at lunch-time on May 20, a gathering of about 150 people were movingly addressed by W.B. (Barney) Ngakane and Helen Joseph. Messages of condolence and tribute received by the family were read out. The meeting ended with the singing of 'Nkosi Sikelel' iAfrika.

A meeting was spontaneously called at the University of Westville on the day of the cremation service, Monday 12 May. Prayers and poems were recited.

In Durban a public meeting was called to mourn the death of this great man. About 500 people attended.

from page two

In 1955 the Transvaal region of the Federation drew up the women's demands for the Freedom Charter, which were incorporated in the final document adopted at the Congress of the People.

By 1955, Lilian Ngoyi had succeeded Joise Mpama as Transvaal President and Helen Joseph had become Transvaal Secretary. In 1956, at the Federation's National Conference, they were elected National President and National Secretary -- a partnership that lasted until banning orders broke it up in the early 1960's.

The Federation has, in fact, never been banned. However, it has become virtually defunct since its leadership was whittled away by banning orders.

This is the third newsletter of the Human Rights Committee. Please pass it on to your friends. It is vital it reaches the greatest number of people possible. We would welcome letters and comment.

Write to Secretary, Sheila Weinberg,  
P.O. Box 79051, Senderwood, 2145.

WATCH OUT FOR FURTHER ISSUES AND TELL YOUR  
FRIENDS TO DO THE SAME!

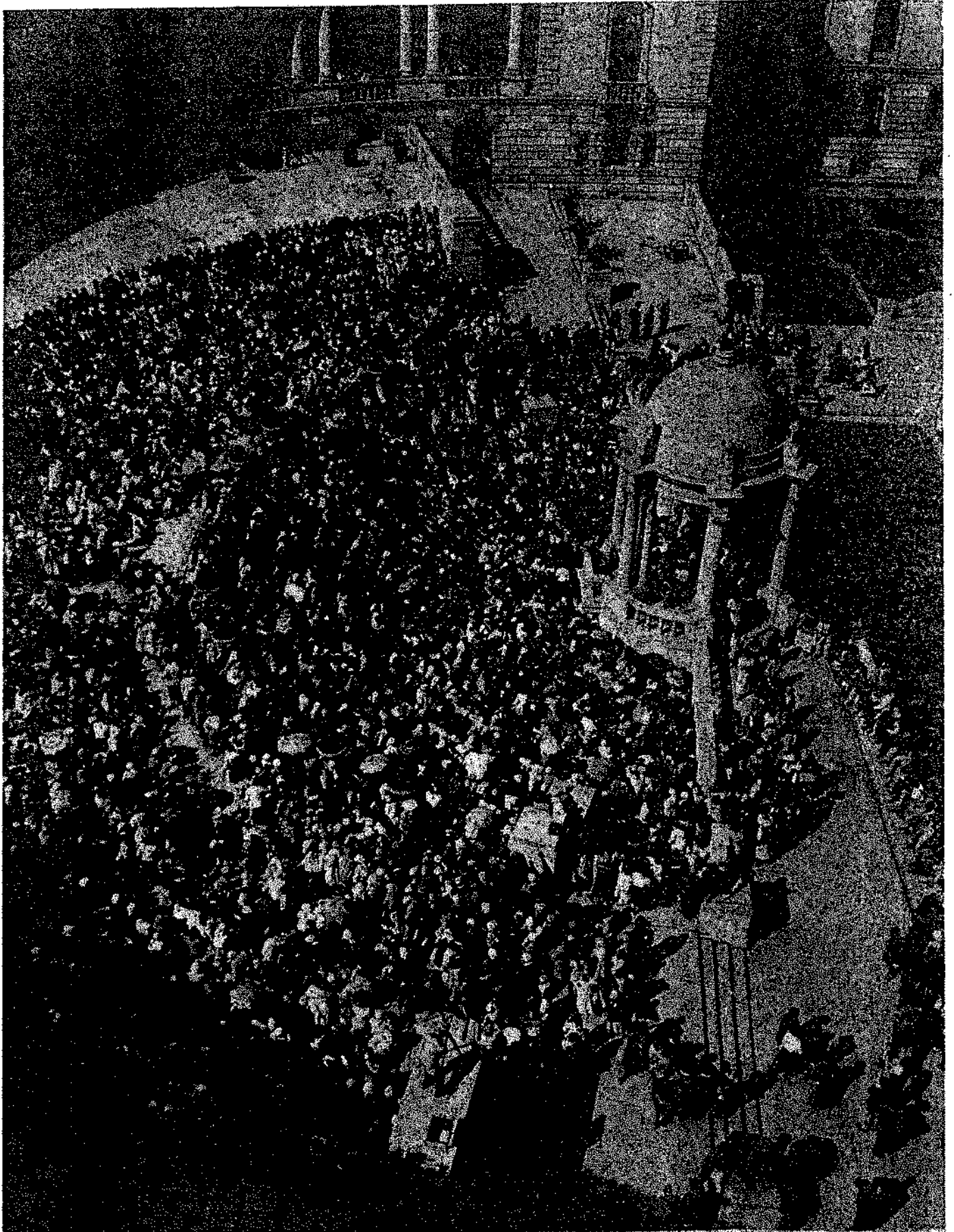


PHOTO: 'THE STAR'

The women mass in the Amphitheatre of the Union Buildings - August 9, 1956.

## THE DEMAND OF THE WOMEN OF SOUTH AFRICA FOR THE WITHDRAWAL OF PASSES FOR WOMEN AND THE REPEAL OF THE PASS LAWS

We, the women of South Africa, have come here today. We represent and we speak on behalf of hundreds of thousands of women who could not be with us. But all over the country, at this moment, women are watching and thinking of us. Their hearts are with us.

We are women from every part of South Africa. We are women of every race, we come from the cities and the towns, from the reserves and the villages. We come as women united in our purpose to save the African women from the degradation of passes.

For hundreds of years the African people have suffered under the most bitter law of all — the pass-law which has brought untold suffering to every African family.

Raids, arrests, loss of pay, long hours at the pass-office, weeks in the cells awaiting trial, forced farm labour — this is what the pass laws have brought to African men. Punishment and misery — not for a crime, but for the lack of a pass.

We African women know too well the effect of this law upon our homes, our children. We, who are not African women, know how our sisters suffer.

Your Government proclaims aloud at home and abroad that the pass laws have been abolished, but we women know this is not true, for our husbands, our brothers, our sons are still being arrested, thousands every day, under these very pass laws. It is only the name that has changed. The "reference book" and the pass are one.

In March 1952, your Minister of Native Affairs denied in Parliament that a law would be introduced

which would force African women to carry passes. But in 1956 your Government is attempting to force passes upon the African women, and we are here today to protest against this insult to all women. For to us an insult to African women is an insult to all women.

We want to tell you what the pass would mean to an African woman, and we want you to know that whether you call it a reference book, an identity book, or by any other disguising name, to us it is a PASS. And it means just this:—

- That homes will be broken up when women are arrested under pass laws.
- That children will be left uncared for, helpless, and mothers will be torn from their babies for failure to produce a pass.
- That women and young girls will be exposed to humiliation and degradation at the hands of pass-searching policemen.
- That women will lose their right to move freely from one place to another.

In the name of women of South Africa, we say to you, each one of us, African, European, Indian, Coloured, that we are opposed to the pass system.

We, voters and voteless, call upon your Government not to issue passes to African women.

We shall not rest until ALL pass laws and all forms of permits restricting our freedom have been abolished.

We shall not rest until we have won for our children their fundamental rights of freedom, justice, and security.

PRESENTED TO THE PRIME MINISTER —  
AUGUST 9th 1956.



from page three

When the leaders returned with their news, the women stood in silence for 30 minutes, their arms raised in the Congress salute. Dressed in their Federation uniforms, they carpeted the amphitheatre in green and black. The silence was broken only by the cries and murmurs of the children.

Following the salute, Lilian Ngoyi, the Federation president, began to softly sing the anthem of free Africa, Nkosi Sikelel' iAfrika. Union Buildings, symbol of white dominance over the oppressed black majority, was soon ringing with the haunting sound of the beautiful anthem sung in four-part harmony by 20 000 women.

Slowly the weary but triumphant women wended their way back to the busstops and taxis - to perhaps their greatest tribute: the working men who crowded the depots stood aside to allow the protesting women to leave first.

In honour of the courage and determination of the women that day, August 9 has become Women's Day in South Africa.

# THE LEADERS....

## Lilian Ngoyi

The Nationalist regime has again found it necessary to silence -- again by banning -- one of its most outspoken and bitter opponents, Mrs Lilian Ngoyi.

The reason is simple: Mrs Ngoyi has refused to knuckle under and desist from political activity.

A former president of the banned ANC Women's League and also of the Federation of South African Women, Mrs Ngoyi was "freed" from restrictions at the beginning of 1973 - after being banned for 11 years. For the first five years she was confined to Orlando.

Now she has been rebanned, this time for a further five years.

During her 30 months of comparative freedom, Mrs Ngoyi embarked on an extensive round of political activity reminiscent of her old style. She has spoken at a number of Human Rights Committee protest meetings and was one of the organisers of the HRC Christmas party for the families of political prisoners and banned people.

Friends believe that her indomitable spirit will carry her through this latest banning with the same courage which she faced the 4018 days duration of her last restrictions.

In 1952, when the Defiance Campaign started to rock South Africa, Mrs Ngoyi was so moved by the courage and sacrifice of those involved that she joined the ANC Women's League and also defied. She appeared in court four times, but was discharged.

A year after she joined the ANC she became chair of the Women's League. In December 1955 she was

elected to the ANC National Executive. In 1956 she was elected National president of the Federation of South African Women.

Mrs Ngoyi was detained for five months during the state of emergency in 1960 and later underwent 71 days solitary confinement under the 90-day Act.

She has visited China and Russia.

In December 1956 she was arrested and charged with High Treason. After standing trial for five years she was acquitted.

When Mrs Ngoyi was banned she was forced to give up her trade union job and had to rely on her talents as a dressmaker working from home. The Security Police made sure she didn't earn much money by raiding, checking passes and asking questions. Her customers were often frightened away.

Now Mrs Ngoyi faces these same problems all over again.

## Helen Joseph

Mrs Helen Joseph, trade unionist, political organiser and enemy of oppression, has become a legend in her own lifetime.

Born in England 70 years ago, Mrs Joseph has adopted South Africa as her country - and with it the struggle for freedom and civil rights.

to page eight

from page seven

She has been detained, jailed, tried for high treason, banned, house-arrested and listed in terms of the Suppression of Communism Act.

Yet as soon as the Nationalists lifted some of her restrictions when it was found that she was suffering from cancer, she immediately launched right back on the offensive on the political front. In spite of poor health, she has addressed meetings all over the country (including HRC protests) and has provided an inspiration to all those involved in the struggle against oppression.

Helen spent the war in military welfare work. Later, inspired by a wish to attack the causes of misery and injustice, she moved into trade union work.

In 1953 she was made a member of the provisional committee at the formation of the S.A. Congress of Democrats, and the next year she was elected to the national executive of the multi-racial SA Federation of Women. She later became its national secretary.

She was one of the organisers of the Congress of the People and was one of the leaders of the women's demonstrations at the Union Buildings.

On December 4 1956 she was arrested on a charge of high treason - only to be acquitted five long years later. In April 1957 she was banned for five years. During the 1960 emergency she was detained. Hours after her first ban expired Mrs Joseph embarked on an 8000 mile trip round South Africa to visit the banished people and to try and trace others who had simply disappeared off the face of the earth.

She returned to Johannesburg in July 1962 and was elected National Vice-president of the Congress of Democrats, which was banned later that year.

In October 1962 Mrs Joseph became the first person in South Africa to be placed under house-arrest.

In the following years she was arrested on three occasions and was convicted once, for failing to report to the police. Those years were also marked by the publication of two books, "If This Be Treason" and "Tomorrow's Sun", a journal which had to be smuggled from South Africa.

Further bans in 1966 prohibited Helen from entering premises of the Industrial Council of the Clothing Industry, and so she lost her job. She was 61 and desperate for work. She eventually got a job at Vanguard Bookshop.

The following year she was banned and house-arrested for a further five years. She was also listed as a member of the Congress of Democrats.

When a bomb was discovered at her home in 1971, Mrs Joseph wasn't as worried as she might have been -- for she was 90 percent certain she had cancer. This proved to be correct, and she underwent drastic, but successful, surgery.

Out of the blue, the government suspended all her bans except the listing. She was free at last -- at least comparatively.

Over the last three years Mrs Joseph has used this freedom to oppose the government exactly as she did in the past.

## Francina Beard

Francina Beard, a former leader of the outlawed ANC, has been jailed, banned and banished in the struggle for the freedom of her people.





LILIAN NGOYI



ALBERTINA SISULU



WINNIE MANDELA



FRANCIS BAARD

from page eight

Now aged 62, Mrs Baard still lives in Mabopane, near Pretoria, the township she was banished to from her home in Port Elizabeth in 1969.

Although her banishment and banning orders expired more than three years ago, she continues to stay in Mabopane -- simply because she no longer has a home in Port Elizabeth and her four children are scattered. "Africa is my home -- I cannot be banished!" she has said.

Her political life began more than a quarter of a century ago when, after seeing the plight of hostel dwellers in Port Elizabeth, she joined the ANC. She was soon an organiser of the Women's League and was one of those rounded up in the country-wide swoop that preceded the Treason Trial.

In 1963 she was arrested and kept in solitary confinement for a year before being sentenced to five years under the Suppression of Communism Act.

When she was released in September 1969 she was banished to Mabopane, a place where she knew nobody. She was also banned. After finding a job, Mrs Baard served 14 days in jail for refusing to carry a pass.

Mrs Baard, who is a widow, has been forced to give up work because of leg trouble, and is helped out by her children.

## Florence Matomela

Florence Matomela was one of the leading members of the Women's League and an executive member of the Federation of South African Women.

A great organiser, she was arrested during the mass arrests of the 60's and was one of those charged, but later acquitted, of treason.

She was one of the great organisers of the Defiance Campaign in the Eastern Cape and took a leading part in the organising of the women for the Union Buildings demonstrations and the Anti-Pass Campaign.

Florence was sentenced to five years imprisonment and while she was serving, was transferred to East London Prison to face further charges.

Her health was very bad, and at this time she was going into diabetic comas.

While she was serving her sentence her husband died, but Florence was not told. The shock was too great, and she died immediately after her release from prison.

### TREASON TRIALISTS

Eighteen women were amongst those arrested during the dawn raids of December 5 1956, and charged with high treason. Five years later, they were all acquitted

The eighteen were:

Mrs Lillian Ngoyi, National President of the S.A. Federation of Women;  
Mrs Helen Joseph, Martha Mochlakoana, Francis Baard, Bertha Mashaba, Yettah Barenblatt, Ruth Slovo, Sonia Bunting, Florence Matomela, Bertha Mkize, Dorothy Shanley, Stella Damons, Mary Ranta, A. Dawood, A. Silinga, C. Jasson, Jacqui Arenstein, Dorothy Nyembe.

# THE 'WIDOWS' ....

There are scores of 'political widows' throughout South Africa - courageous women who cheerfully struggle to maintain their homes and feed their children, knowing that their husbands have lost their liberty in the cause of freedom and justice.

We pay tribute to these brave women and salute their courage and determination.

It is impossible to mention them all here, and so we choose to write about the wives of two leaders, Mrs Nonsikelelo Albertina Sisulu and Mrs Winnie Mandela, who typify them all.

## Albertina Sisulu

Mrs Sisulu, now aged 57, "lost" her husband Walter Sisulu 13 years ago when he was sentenced to life imprisonment for his part in anti-government political activities.

At that time the five Sisulu children were aged between four and sixteen years old.

In the face of great hardship - she has been banned and house-arrested for 10 years - Mrs Sisulu managed to give all her children a good education.

Her restrictions have made it difficult for her to find employment and in the early years she did knitting and sewing at home to make ends meet. She is a trained nursing sister and now works at the child health clinic in Orlando East.

Mrs Sisulu is admired and respected by all those around her for her undaunted courage and cheerfulness.

## Winnie Mandela

Mrs Winnie Mandela, wife of Nelson Mandela, the ANC leader serving a life sentence on Robben Island, is remarkable in at least two respects: the way in which the trials and tribulations of her life have failed to mar her beauty or her spirit and her continuing dedication to the struggle for freedom in South Africa. In spite of her banning and house-arrest orders, which restrict her movement and expression, she remains an inspiration to those involved in the struggle

Mrs Mandela has suffered more than a fair share of tribulations: left to look after two baby daughters when Nelson was jailed, she was unable because of restriction orders to work as a social worker, the work she is qualified to do.

Forced into ordinary office work, she has been hired and fired from numerous jobs -- thanks to the harrassment of the Security Police and the restrictions and time limits imposed in her banning orders.

Thanks to friends in England, Sir Robert Birley and his wife, the two Mandela girls, Zinzi and Zeni, are receiving education in Swaziland. This year Zeni was able to visit her father on the Island for the first time when she reached the age of sixteen.

from page eleven

Besides all the restrictions and harassment, Mrs Mandela has also had to face numerous terms of imprisonment. In 1969 she was detained for 17 months, and later acquitted together with 21 others. She has just completed a six-month sentence for breaking her banning orders.

On several occasions the Mandela house has been under attack by "thugs" who creep into the rooms at night and terrorise the family. Mrs Mandela's car has also been tampered with.

## Rookeya Saloojee

Rookeya Saloojee, the widow of Babla Saloojee, who died while being detained by the Security Police, is carrying on her dead husband's ideals by being a member of the Human Rights Committee.

Babla and Rookeya had been married for only two years and six days when he was arrested on July 6 1964. He died on September 9, following a fall from the 7th floor of The Grays, Security Branch Headquarters.

Babla, who was an articled clerk with a firm of attorneys, was a member of the Transvaal Indian Congress.

## banned

Women banned under the Suppression of Communism Act. The date following the name indicates the expiry of the orders.

Jacqueline Arenstein (31.8.78)  
Mabel Balfour (31.1.76)  
Amina Cachalia (30.11.78)  
Martha Dhlamini (30.9.75)  
Paula Ensor (31.3.78)  
Sheila Lapinsky (31.3.78)  
Lindelwa Mabandla (31.10.78)  
Winnie Mandela (13.9.75)  
Caroline Mashaba (31.5.76)  
Virginia Mngoma (30.9.75)  
Mary Moodley (31.3.78)  
Sam Moodley (31.7.78)  
Phyllis Naidoo (31.3.76)  
Rita Ndzanga (30.9.75)  
Lillian Ngoyi (10.7.80)  
Ela Ramgobin (31.7.78)  
Soma Reddy (30.9.78)  
Lesley Schermbrucker (30.11.78)  
Joyce Sikakane (30.9.75)  
Albertina Sisulu (31.7.79)  
Elizabeth van der Heyden (30.4.79)  
Violet Weinberg (20.11.78)  
Gwendoline Wilcox (30.9.76)

The Human Rights Committee needs financial support from the people and their friends who support its actions.

All amounts, however small, will be welcomed by the Committee.

Please send donations to HRC Secretary,  
Sheila Weinberg  
P.O. Box 79051  
Senderwood, 2145.

THANK YOU!

# PRISONERS

Dorothy Nyembe, one of the two women political prisoners in South Africa, is serving a 15 year sentence for sabotage.

One of the outstanding leaders in the struggle for freedom, Dorothy is now 45 and has served seven years of her sentence, first in Barberton and now in Kroonstad Prison. She was sentenced on March 23 1969.

A disciple of Chief Luthuli, Dorothy grew up in the struggle for the liberation of her people. She was only 16 when she had her first brush with the law in 1946 during the first Defiance Campaign.

Born of a proud Zulu family, her father had countless wives and Dorothy has something like 39 brothers and countless sisters. Her mother died when she was eight and she grew up under very difficult conditions. She craved for education and ran away from one uncle to another trying to quench her thirst for knowledge.

From an early age Dorothy was given serious tasks

and during her political career she has been arrested time without number.

During the Anti-pass Campaign she led the Natal women in one of the biggest campaigns ever staged in the province. She again led the women in the great Union Buildings demonstration. It was during the 1961 Cato Manor riots and the campaign against the beer gardens that she showed her outstanding qualities as a fighter. She was then Natal President of the Federation of South African Women.

She was arrested during the mass arrests in the 60's when the ANC members were rounded up. She served in Nylstroom and Barberton,

Dorothy was released in 1968, but 14 days later she was re-arrested on the charge of sabotage.

In the seven years she has already served, Dorothy has had no visitors and rarely gets letters. She is at present studying for her Junior Certificate and will write in October.

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Mrs Amina Desai, a 55-year-old-mother of four, is the second woman political prisoner at present in South Africa. She is serving a five-year sentence under the Terrorism Act.

She was detained on October 22 1971 during the nation-wide swoops in connection with the arrest of Ahmed Timol, a distant relative of her late husband. She was held under Section Six until charged in March 1972 together with Salim Essop, Indris Moodley and Yusuf Essack. She stood trial at the Old Synagogue in Pretoria and was convicted, with the others, at the beginning of 1973. She is now serving her sentence, with Dorothy Nyembe, in Kroonstad Prison.

Her late Husband, Mr Suluman Desai, was a former secretary of the Transvaal Indian Congress.

Mrs Desai, who ran an import business until the time of her arrest, receives few visits because all her children are abroad.

Because they are political prisoners, neither Dorothy or Mrs Desai can expect remission of their sentences.

# AGONY OF **BLACK** WOMEN

In racist South Africa no one feels the pains of the migratory labour laws more than the Black woman who is left alone to till the land, build the home, educate and bring up the children single-handed, whilst the father goes to the mines, to the urban areas in search of food and the means to run his home, which he visits at intervals when his contract expires. The children, who need him as a father figure, during their formative years are compelled to do without him. He is in fact more of a visitor in his home than the head of the family he should be. The woman is compelled to do what her husband should have been doing: hoeing the fields, reaping the mielies, feeding the cattle if there are any. The woman, if she is to have a family, has to periodically come to the urban area to her husband "azothatha isisu" to fall pregnant and go back as soon as this happens. This is commonly planned after the hoeing season, which demands most of her attention so that the pregnancy can coincide with the winter months when there is not much to be done in the fields.

Since the food she eats is normally starch with one common protein, beans, she invariably needs constant medical care, which she gets often from the old-fashioned local white quack who visits the outskirts of the rural areas once or twice a week in a pseudo-clinic. In most cases he prescribes litre sized medicines, a simple mixture of coloured water for the illiterate mother-to-be who psychologically believes in quantity. For that coloured water she will pay something like R1,50, without the examination fee.

A man who suffers from high blood pressure will get the same prescription as the pregnant mother. So the child is born, already a prospective victim of gastro-enteritis, kwashiorkor, malnutrition, etc. At one time in the Transkei alone the infant mortality rate was reported to be as high as 40 percent, and the incidence of TB was also highest in this area.

The land, tilled generation after generation by women without modern methods of soil preservation is threadbare, and can yield no more even if such methods were introduced now. The land is so overpopulated that the puppets of separate development are compelled to clamour for more land from their white masters in Pretoria.

to page fifteen

from page fourteen

## THE WEB OF RACIAL LAWS

So numerous are the racial laws that make the life of a black woman a sheer hell that it is not possible to mention the lot. Firstly, to live a reasonably honourable life she has to be married and must qualify influx-wise to be in the urban area if she lives there. One of the greatest catastrophies that can befall her is to be widowed. That moment means loss of her home for her children. Unlike her white counterpart she cannot buy a home, even if she has the means. The white official will not even wait for her to complete her mourning period peacefully. The husband's death means countless trips to the commissioner's office, endless raids by the municipal "blackjacks" at dawn.

If she is lucky, bribable clerks will fix her up for a tidy amount, or depending on who she is, there may be such an uproar about her plight that various organisations make representations on her behalf to the powers that be.

Unmarried mothers and single women are not even recognised by the law as human beings who have the right to own homes. If the unmarried mother is "lucky" enough to have a son, he invariably starts work as soon as he turns 16 so that the mother can qualify for a house. With him all she needs is proof that the boy will pay the rent. Education for a black child is not compulsory, all the system is bothered about is the payment of the rent. Even elementary education is not subsidised. A mother may have ten children, whom she maintains with the money she gets from doing "the white madam's" washing, who if she is "generous" will pay her something like R2 for washing and R2 for ironing. If she is in full domestic employment she is required to look after the white children from about 6 am to anything like 10 or 11 pm while her own children are left to fend for themselves at a dangerous and tender age. She is lucky if she is able to spend weekends with them. She mostly gets a day off during the week when her children are in fact at school or at work, so that she hardly sees them.

She will never know whether they play truant or not, smoke benzine or sniff glue. She will never know whether they are part members of the "twilight family", the black children who litter the streets of Johannesburg, hanging around cinemas as little beggars, pleading for handouts from the white "masters" or the fur-coated "madams" who impress their rich boy-friends by throwing cents to the "picannins" with tattered clothes.

Even if children have both parents, they may play truant for hundreds of other reasons. They may be required to attend school 10 kilometres from home where the school of their ethnic group is. The black mother's choice of school for her children is determined by the law, no matter how much she would like another school. Lately she even has to produce a permit proving that the children have a right to attend school in the urban area. Black schools have double sessions in the lower standards, which means that each child has endless unsupervised hours to himself without recreational facilities to keep him off the streets. He whiles away time by joining a non-schooling gang in a little gambling game that builds up to bigger things. Even if the mother finds

from page fifteen

out that this is happening, the law which is invariably against her, can do nothing to help until the child commits an offence and is whisked away to a place of safety or committed to an institution which has no corrective or rehabilitative facilities - but is a junior prison.

Then there is the educated black women. The only difference between her and the domestic worker is that she has a string of certificates. She probably sits behind a desk at work, earns half of her white counterpart who may be academically junior to her. This elite black woman is intolerable to the white female. She is regarded as a perpetual threat, since the employer can simply replace the white worker with three black ones for the same salary, resulting in more production and cheap labour.

Once more the law protects the interests of the white worker with the Job Reservation Act, even though the country's labour problems are such that this law is crumbling and quietly being shelved by the very proponents of Nationalist theories.

The pettiness the black woman has to put up with is unimaginable. The original planning of the biggest city in the country, Johannesburg did not accommodate her: there are no toilet facilities for her except in the new structures. She is required to share the toilet with the cleaners who are men. Very often this toilet is on the top floor.

She may be a professional woman who joins a firm where the white in charge is merely a standard eight girl who got the job because of the colour of her skin. This results in a serious situation, as one of the most difficult things is to fight a "white complex" in a country where the system actually legislates to preserve white supremacy. In the past the educated black women who battled to get a decent job surrendered to the set-up and became subservient to these uncultivated white women who put every obstacle in their way to force them to leave the jobs of their own accord.

#### THE POLITICAL GRASS WIDOWS

Here lies the tragedy of our country, women who have to bear the worst blows of our society. The plight of these women is best depicted in the individual case histories (on other pages). A black woman has seen her husband whisked away at dead of night, children clinging to her and crying hysterically. Endless midnight raids, further arrests, perhaps of herself, or persecution of herself, her children, her family and friends. In some instances she has been thrown out of the house because she cannot account for her husband's whereabouts, who is alleged to have left the country. She has at times been widowed without knowing it, or if she knows, she relies on press reports she hardly believes and keeps hoping that it is just a mistake, that someday he will come home. Each time there are death reports at the border she wonders if her husband is one of them. She dare not go and enquire lest she invite detention under Section 6 of the Terror Act.



# ROLE OF WOMEN

by SAMORA MACHEL

Samora Machel, President of Mozambique, has refuted many false assumptions about the struggle for Women's Liberation, whilst leading FRELIMO against Portuguese colonialism. He rejects the notion that emancipation (of women) is a mere mechanical equality between man and woman. For this would merely mean that man and woman do the same job and share household chores. As if to say: "I will wash dishes today, and tomorrow is your turn." "If there are no female lorry- or tractor-drivers in FRELIMO, then we ought to get them immediately, regardless of the reason for this".

Machel rejects an approach like this. In western society this mechanical concept of emancipation violates real liberation of women. To many an emancipated woman smokes, drinks, wears slacks or miniskirts, refuses to bear children, etc. To others Women's Lib means obtaining degrees at varsity, or reaching certain economic, social or cultural independence. Machel regards these concepts as wrong and superficial. Not one of these penetrates the heart of the matter of discrimination.

If women want to liberate themselves, they must make a political choice. This means, that a dynamic political organisation will show the way for the WHOLE POPULATION in its struggle against the old society which exploited them. "In our case that is to say, that the woman - in order to emancipate - must make the political course of FRELIMO her own and must live according to this line in a creative manner; otherwise they involve themselves in sterile and pointless fights," said President Machel.

Women should be involved in the tasks of the organisation. "A plant must get roots before it can grow, in the same way the political line is based on the revolutionary practice." (Machel). Therefore, women should take part in the struggle of the population, should be organised. Only then will they be able to make the political ideology their own. They must be involved in the struggle for political education of the future generation, for mobilisation and organisation of the population on a wide scale. This process of liberation and development will lead to a better ideological understanding and a greater knowledge of the reality, society and nature.

Another aspect raised by President Machel is cultural and scientific. This enables women to get a better understanding of their relation with nature and society. "Through this the myths, which suppress them psychologically and which deny them any form of initiative, are exploded." This is the way to involve women on all levels of decision-making and planning in respect to childcare, hospitals, schools, factories, armed forces, diplomacy, art, science, culture, etc. "It should be emphasised that all these matters do not concern exclusively women, because men, too, are alienated, although in a different way."

## **hrc aims**

The Human Rights Committee was formed in September 1974 by a group of people who want freedom from oppression in South Africa. The committee stands for an internationally recognised set of values which do not, generally, exist in South Africa - principles which are embodied in the United Nations' Declaration of Human Rights, from which we draw our name.

Our aim is to protest the lack of freedoms in the society; to protest the violation of human rights by the Government which is not even prepared to sign the UN Declaration; to promote consciousness among the people of S.A. and overseas of the injustices of the present regime; and to join the increasingly popular movement to bring about full rights for all the people of this country.

- \* We stand for majority rule and the radical changes this will involve in all sections of South African society.
- \* We stand for a society free from discrimination on any grounds - colour, class, belief or sex.
- \* We stand for the unconditional release of political prisoners. †
- \* We stand for the abolition of detention without trial, the freeing of detainees, the lifting of house-arrest and all other restrictions.
- \* We believe that South Africa's exiles, if permitted to return, could make a full contribution to the construction of a free society.

We have received encouraging support from the people. This is vital if our role is to have real meaning in the struggle. We are all oppressed in South Africa, and we must all struggle together for freedom and equality!



from page sixteen

These widows live in their own world of hope, the black woman's world of hope, hope for a change, hope that daddy will come home, hope that she will one day lead a normal life, too, in a people's South Africa, when the leaders of our people will be back from Robben Island and exile.

This, then, is the dream of every black woman, the hope of those who have dedicated their lives to the black cause, women who have born their burden courageously without a flinch against unimaginable odds, mothers of the present youth who have shaken the enemy to the core, mothers of those sons of Africa who are facing charges under the Terrorism Act in Pretoria, mothers of those sons who have shaken the enemy - behind bars, unarmed as they are. Their mothers salute these leaders of tomorrow.



from page seventeen

Finally Samora Machel rejects the assumed superiority of man which is merely to boost his male ego. The man-wife relationship "should be based purely on love." "We don't mean the banal, romantic love, which is not much more than an emotional excitement and an idealised view of life. We think that love only exists between free and equal people, with the same ideas about and involvement in the serving of the people..... This forms the basis upon which the moral and emotional relationship, - which forms love -, is built. It is necessary that we discover these new dimensions which were hitherto unknown in our country."

# INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S YEAR

Equality between men and women does not exist. The United Nations have proclaimed 1975 as International Women's Year. The aim is to unite the whole world behind efforts to change laws and traditions that discriminate against women.

The United Nations is focussing attention upon the urgent need to redress the existing imbalances.

Women, who make up approximately one half of the world population, have been prevented from making a full contribution to the development of the world.

In spite of achievements, it is a fact that women have no equal share in decision making, policy, and benefits. As a group they remain a source of cheap and underdeveloped labour.

From infancy boys and girls are indoctrinated to accept their different roles. Because of this stereotyping, women do not get a chance to play an equal part, and lack opportunity to fill a full role in society.

Papers presented at an IWY meeting in Mexico stated: "While males share much of the misery and hardship of poverty, almost universally women are worse off than men. Infant mortality for girls is much higher. Where there are food shortages, girls get less to eat. Where health care is available, boys are favoured."

IWY forces us to take a fresh look at discriminatory practices, which are taken for granted. Our day-to-day language has in-built discrimination. We speak about MAN-kind, MAN-, etc.

A daily dose of this does create a subconscious inferiority complex in women, because through language children are introduced to culture.

Legislation discriminates against women: e.g., laws on taxation.

The business world takes it for granted that women are paid less. The list of discriminatory practices is endless.

to back page

from page nineteen

IWY was launched because the time is ripe for action on a world-wide scale. The complacency of men entrenched in their dominant positions has to be shaken.

The theme of IWY is peace, development and equality.

It is time to re-evaluate legislation, programmes, traditions, and practices that oppress women.

To be truly relevant IWY should not be isolated. The structural change needed must lead to a new society wherein nobody will be discriminated against, not on sexual, racial, cultural, age, etc. grounds.

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In terms of Government Notice 1494 of 1st August 1975, the HRC Bulletin of June 26th 1975 was declared to be undesirable in terms of Section 47 (2) (e). This means that it is considered prejudicial to the safety of the State, the general welfare or the peace and good order. As a result of this it is now unlawful to distribute this issue, and readers are advised not to distribute or show it to anyone.

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P.O. Box 79051, Senderwood, 2145.

EDITORS: M. Timol, S. Weinberg, S. Naidoo  
P.O. Box 79051, Senderwood, 2145