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# SPEAK

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No.63

AUGUST 1994

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# INSIDE

## SPEAK STAFF

### PEOPLE

**Reaching for the stars** 5  
Grace Mahlaba

**Dancing her way to India** 13  
Lucy Msomi

### FEATURES

**Moutse women get active** 8  
Taking control of their health

**Trees give life** 18  
Plant a tree today

**South African women unite** 21  
Celebrate National Women's Day

**Sexuality, STD's and AIDS** 24  
Women take up the challenge

**The tragedy of HIV/AIDS** 28  
How it will affect the RDP

### DEBATE

**Pornography** 10  
Should the ban stay?

### POEM

**Women are respected in Africa** 30

### ARTS

**A first for Cuba** 16  
Women who broke a taboo

### SPORT

**Setting the record** 26  
Africa's first woman gold medallist

### HEALTH

**Breast Cancer** 31  
What you should know

### WIN

**A radio cassette player worth R200** 15

### REGULARS

**Readers talk back** 2

**Kwa-Sophie** 4

**Health briefs** 29

**As a matter of fact** 35

**Taxi Talk** 36

**Notice Board** 37



**A dream coming true**

*Page 5*



**Women take charge of health**

*Page 8*



**August 9 —  
A different celebration**

*Page 21*

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## COMMENT

### FIGHT FOR THE TRUTH

Is it important to know the truth about the past or is it better to forget it?

Is it possible, once you know it, to forgive those who committed crimes against women, men and children?

These are some of the questions being asked in the debate about whether we should have a Truth Commission.

When Justice Minister Dullah Omar announced the setting up of a Truth Commission, many people cheered — at last we would get to know who exactly was responsible for destroying the lives of many under apartheid.

Others were not so happy. They are worried that a Truth Commission will open up old wounds. This, they say, will break down the spirit of reconciliation.

Others debate how far a Truth Commission should go. Should it publicly release the names of those people responsible for murder?

It seems as if the debate remains with politicians. The views of the mothers, partners, wives, sisters and daughters of people who have disappeared are not asked.

Can they forget? SPEAK thinks it is important that the new government listens to those affected. They need to know what happened to the people they love. You cannot forgive people whose faces you do not know. And the new government should not judge those who might never be able to forgive. As women, we must fight for the truth to be known.

# Talk Back

## Not so privileged

I wish to comment on the views of Privileged Progressive in the June issue of SPEAK. I assume that she thinks of herself as progressive because she supports abortion and privileged because she could afford to go to England to have one.

But why does a woman decide to end the life of her child?

If a woman claims that it is her right to do what she wants, what about the rights of the unborn child?

Don't the majority of people agree that the basic human right is the right to life and that a progressive society is to care for its weakest citizens.

Of course, there is a question of when exactly does life start.

But what do other readers think? What do all mothers out there say? Do mothers really have the right to decide whether to have an abortion or not? Are they now, the new Gods?

*A lover of life  
Malelane*

**Speak believes that every woman has a right over her own body and life. It is difficult enough for a woman to**

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

**reach such a decision without people playing God themselves. If a woman chooses to have an abortion or not, it is her right and it should be respected.— Editor**

## Abortion should not be legalised

I enjoyed your July issue of SPEAK very much. I also liked the poem by Boitumelo Mofokeng.

I agree with Faith Neta that it is wrong to legalise abortion. I hope the government will ignore calls to legalise abortion. Our society is in such a bad state that boys and girls lose their virginity as early as 13-15 years of age. We have to teach our

children, both at home and at school, that morals are important. Parents have to be involved in order to stop a high birth rate, especially among teenagers.

As a man, I know that it is not my right to say too much on your magazine. As you have failed to increase the number of pages of your magazine, can't you include two special pages for pen-friends, problems about sex, partners, diseases and advice on cheating partners and men who do not want to support their illegitimate children?

*Abram Modisenyane  
Benoni*

**Speak welcomes letters from everyone. You might be interested to know that an equal number of men and women read this magazine. We always welcome criticism and suggestions from both men and women. From our next issue, SPEAK will have an agony column to deal with some of the issues you have raised.— Editor**

**What a fraud**

Congratulations SPEAK on

your tireless effort to put women first by writing on issues which affect them on a daily basis.

I enjoyed reading your July issue very much. My only disappointment was coming face to face with "Dr" Nomaza Paintin, from South Africa — or is it Zimbabwe — on your front cover.

As honest and hard-working people, we try so hard to present ourselves to the world as women of substance. Women the world over have so many other battles to fight and we really do not need people like Paintin to embarrass us in such a way.

What I do not understand is why authorities could allow a fraud to overshadow such a historic event. Let's hope this will never be allowed to happen again. As women we must condemn what she has did in the strongest terms.

*Nomsa Kumalo  
Bulawayo, Zimbabwe*

**In the true spirit of reconciliation we must learn to forgive people like her. She did it for reasons we might never know. The struggle for South African women continues and that is**

**what we must concentrate on. — Editor**

**Thank you PPASA**

I'm glad that at last, an organisation like the Planned Parenthood Association of South Africa, is doing something to address problems we as youth face about family planning. In your last issue, I read about the youth-friendly centre and services offered by the PPASA. I often face difficulties when I go to a "normal" family planning clinic. The sisters are usually unfriendly and make me feel guilty about being sexually active.

I hope PPASA opens centres throughout the country soon, so that teenagers have a place to go to without being worried or scared.

*Selina Naidu  
Chatsworth*

**The PPASA is planning to open other centres so that the problems you are talking about can be dealt with effectively. — Editor**

**WINNER OF  
OUR CAMERA  
COMPETITION**

**★ The lucky winner of the SPEAK Camera Competition in our June issue is Thabo Tsatsi from Soweto. Congratulations!!!**

**GOT A PROBLEM?**

**We have exciting news for our readers. As from next month, we are running an Agony column. If you have any problems, please write to the Editor and we will do our best to help you.**

# Kwa-Sophie

■ Ag nee, my friend complained to me the other day. When she phoned to find out whether her maternity benefits cheque was ready, the telephone operator answered her call saying: "Department of Manpower".

"Sophie," my friend said to me, "seems like we have to wait for the new new South Africa for some of the names to change."

Mind you, she added, it does explain why we have to wait so long to get our maternity cheques."

■ I have a special coffee mug at home. The wording on it goes: "They've finally found something which does the work of ten men. One woman."

■ Can someone please help the Sunday Times into the new new South Africa? Recently they wrote an article about how women parliamentarians are organising around women's issues. In it they quoted the spokesman of the ANC's women's caucus Phumzile Ngcuka. Funny, when we last met Phumzile, we could have sworn she was still a woman.

■ Which reminds me, some years ago a male union organiser was telling me how strong the women workers were when on strike at a par-



ticular factory. "They fought like men," he said. Oh dear.

■ Another friend of mine has just had a baby girl. When she dresses her in blue, everybody takes it for granted that the baby is a boy. When she dresses her in pink, people ask if her baby is a boy or a girl. Which just goes to show that women's attitudes are changing.

■ A bunch of flowers from us to new MP Mohammed Valli Moosa. When asked to give his maiden speech (first speech) in parliament he stood up and said he would not use the term "maiden" as it is sexist. He said he chose to call it his "virginal" speech because this applies to both men and women.

## Quote of the month:

The master's tools will never dismantle the master's house — Audre Lorde

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# Acting with a mission

Although many in her community say she does not have a "proper" job, Grace Mahlaba does not care. Acting is her life. *Bobby Rodwell* chats to her

**G**race Mahlaba always wanted to be an actor. And, with lots of determination and hard work, she reached her goal.

Mahlaba believes actors are teachers too: "Theatre must educate people who are watching it. Actors are important teachers in society," she says.

On stage, TV and in the movies, she is always moving on to the next challenge.

Mahlaba, who lives in Alexandra, has been acting since she was a young girl. When she was only eight years old, she and a group of friends put on a play called "Umona". The play looked at people's greed in society. It was so popular that it ran for four years. People came to watch the play in schools and church halls all over the township. In 1977, the group was asked to put on the play at the Alexandra Stadium for the International Day of the Child.

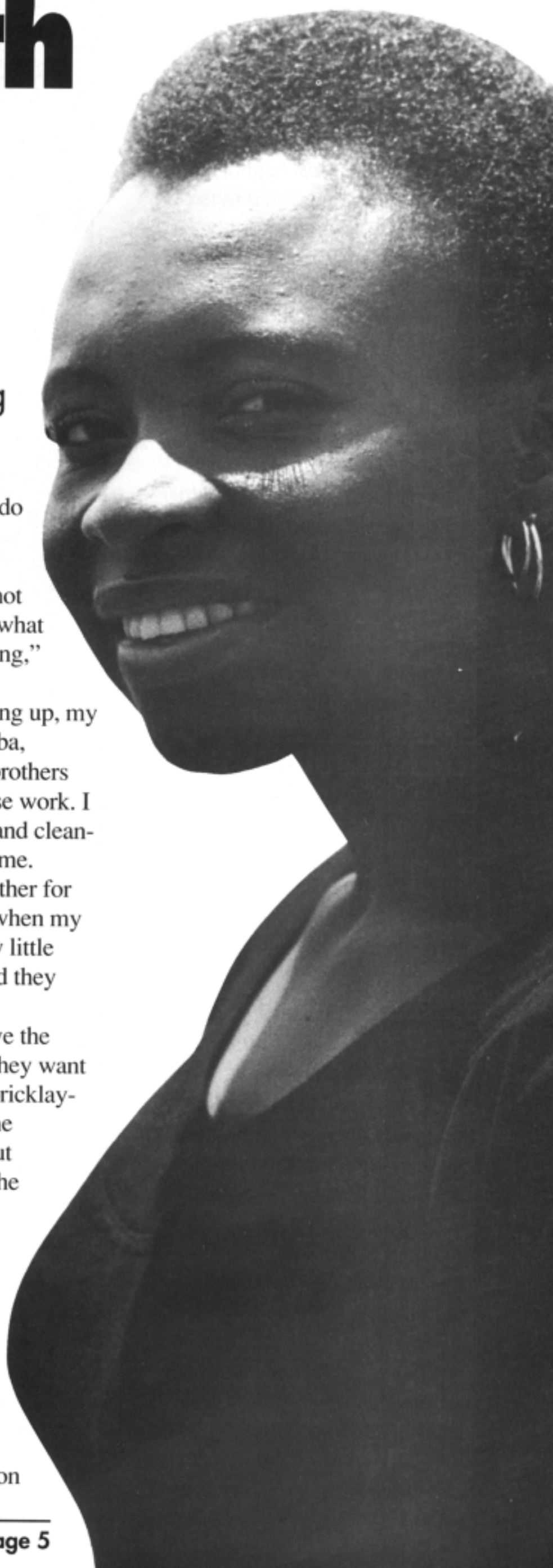
When the young boy in the story left the production, Mahlaba changed her role from the old lady to the young boy.

"It was easy for me to do that because, even as a child, I believed that boys and girls should not be seen as different in what they are capable of doing," she adds.

"While I was growing up, my mother, Martha Mahlaba, believed my younger brothers should not do any house work. I had to do the cooking and cleaning when I returned home. While I respect my mother for raising us on her own when my father died, I taught my little brothers differently, and they cook and clean now.

"Women should have the choice to do anything they want to. If I wanted to be a bricklayer, I would have become one", says Mahlaba. But she always knew that she wanted to be an actor, and her mother gave her a lot of support.

"My mother wanted to be a singer but, before she knew it, she had two children, so all hopes of a singing career were gone. I think her situation



made me more determined to make my own life, and my own choices about what I wanted to do," Mahlaba told SPEAK.

Her ideas on the role of women have often put her into conflict with other members of her family. "Going into theatre is frowned upon in my community. Some members of my family think it has made me too independent. Like most young black women at that time, I was expected to become a nurse or a teacher," she says.

And, while Mahlaba has become a very successful actor, many people in her neighbourhood feel sorry for her.

"Shame, she does not have a proper job," she hears people whisper as she walks past.

In fact, her career has taken her to many different parts of the world, including Morocco in North Africa, where she acted in a film called, "Being Human". The film shows how little has changed in the relationship between men and women over the last 200 years. Mahlaba co-starred with Robin Williams and the film is expected to be screened in South Africa later this year.

**"**I enjoyed doing that film because it is a comedy and makes people laugh, but it will also make them think.

"As it is an American film, with part of it being made in Africa, I met people with different languages and cultures to my own."

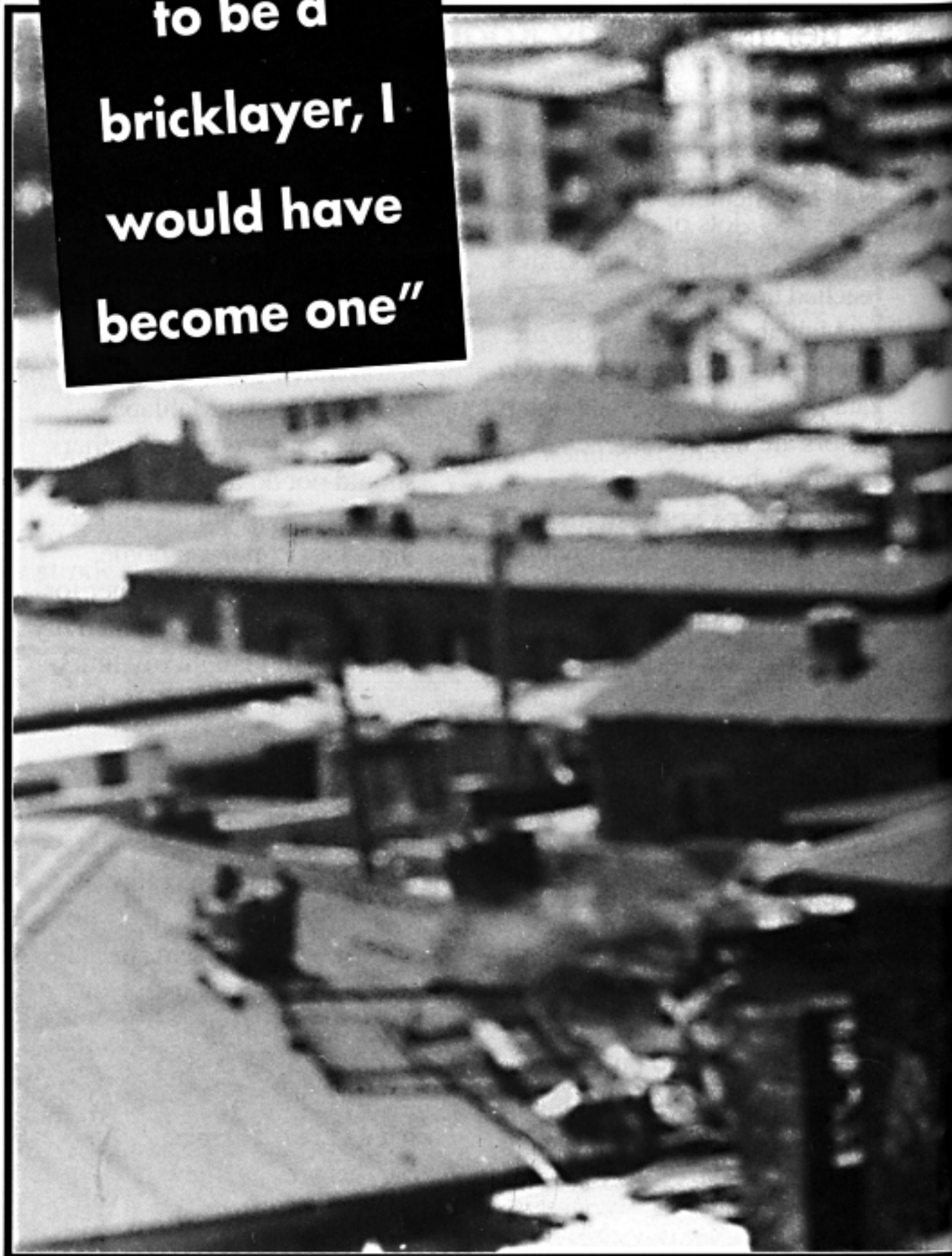
She was also met interesting people in Zimbabwe when she acted in the film "Bopha", in 1992.

"What I find exciting about

**"Women should have the choice to do anything they want to. If I wanted to be a bricklayer, I would have become one"**

my job as an actor, is that I get to travel and meet new people, and learn from new experiences. It is so important in life to learn new things that change the way we look at things," adds Mahlaba.

There is one thing that she believes should change in society in South Africa, and that is the practice of lobola. "I think it is very bad in terms of the image that it creates of women. Most



**Actor Mahlaba with Alexandra in the background: Just in South Africa, art and culture will always**



men believe that because they have paid lobola, they own their wives," says Mahlaba. "I think it is an outdated custom and would like to change it for myself. It adds to the dominant role men have in relationships.

**"B**esides, parents have to pay a lot of money to bring up their sons. Why don't the bride's parents pay lobola for them?"

she asks. "And why can't women propose marriage to men, why do they have to wait for the man to do it?"

Another issue Mahlaba feels very strongly about is language. "Apartheid has tried to destroy the richness of languages in South Africa. People in the Transvaal speak so many different languages, but if they do not speak English they are disempowered.

"Most books, films and plays are in English. This has to change. If a play is made for the stage or for television, it should be done in the language appropriate to the story."

Mahlaba speaks nine languages and is very proud of her knowledge of South African languages. In 1985, she had a part in the Sepedi television show, "Bophelo ke Semphekgo". It was very popular, and people in her community still call her "Mapholo", which was the name of her character. "Because it was in a South African language, people could relate to it," she says.

"As actors, there is a lot we can do to promote the use of the eleven official languages. It is an important part of change in South Africa.

**"A**ctors have never been respected and are paid low salaries, but there are so many ways in which we can bring about change in society. Just as cultural activities helped to bring about political change in South Africa, art and culture will always play a role in changing society. This is the role I see myself playing," adds Mahlaba.

Talking to her, it is easy to understand why she has challenged the role expected of her as a woman. Mahlaba has a clear idea of who she is and what she wants from life.

"Women must stand up and ask themselves if they are happy with their lives and what society expects from them. It is important that we continue to raise problems so that things will change, and we can live in a better society," adds Mahlaba. ☪



As cultural activities helped bring about political change, art and culture will always play a role in changing society in the future



Photos: Rosalee Telela, SPEAK

**Taking control. Moutse women attend a health forum meeting**

# Moutse's battle for health care

**Most people in our country, especially women and the poor, have little control or say over health care. But one community has decided to get involved in running its health services. Rosalee Telela visited Moutse**

**T**he people of Moutse in the Eastern Transvaal, especially women, have a long history of resistance. This 700 000-strong community resisted being part of KwaNdebele. They also fought for land, water, schools, clinics and better education.

Faced with a lack of good health services, they are determined to fight for change.

"There is only one hospital, called Philadelphia, which has 600 beds and serves the 1.4 million people who live in Moutse and KwaNdebele. There are only two clinics and some mobile units which visit once a month," said

Martha Matlala, chairperson of the newly formed Moutse Health Forum (MHF).

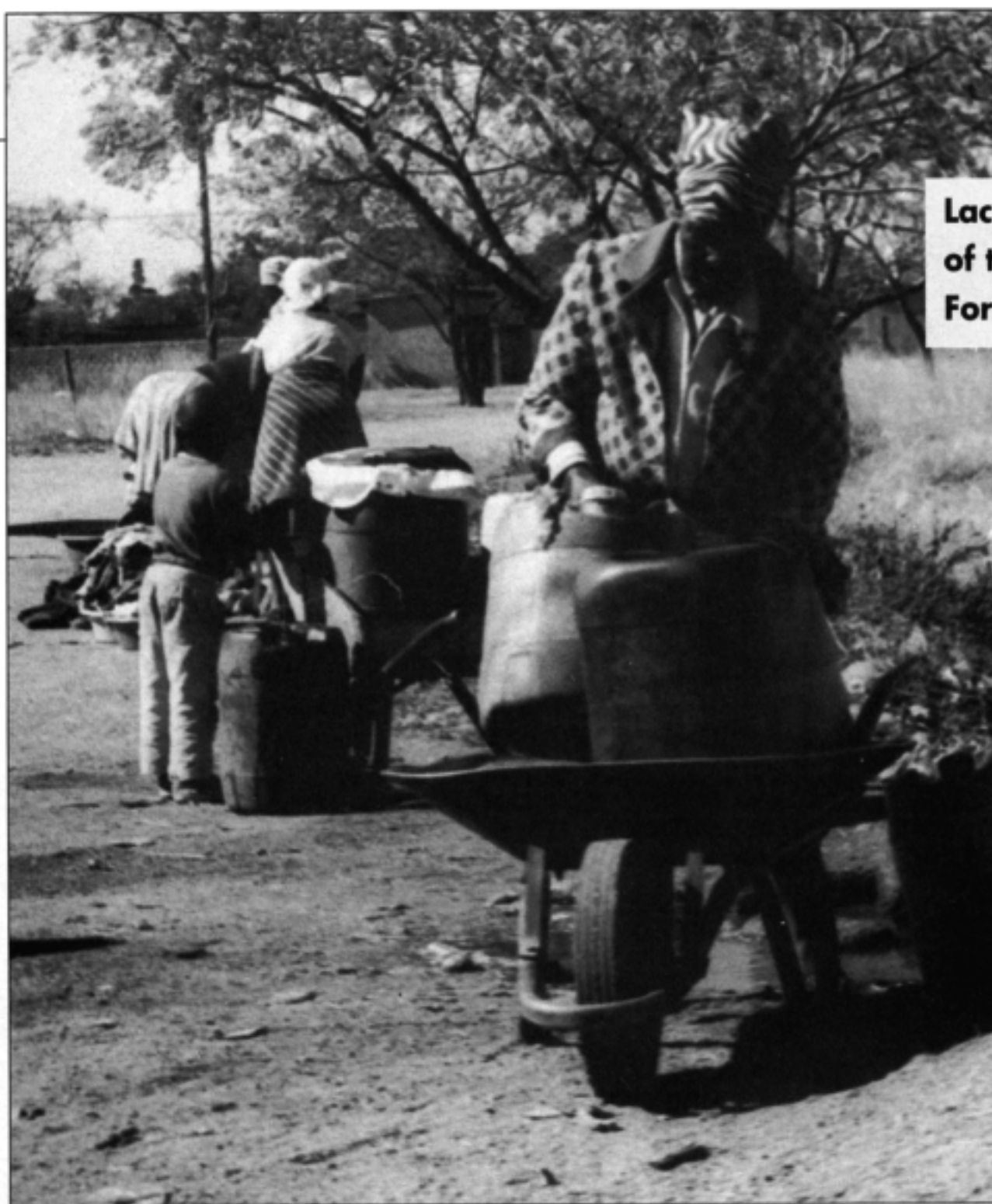
"The hospital cannot cope with the number of patients. There is a shortage of beds, food, medicine and doctors," she added.

This situation forced the women of Moutse to write a letter, and later to meet with, former health minister Dr Rina Venter.

"We met with her, but nothing concrete came out of that meeting. Later we met with people from the national health department and the Philadelphia hospital board.

"This time, the civics were part

**Lack of access to clean water is one of the problems the Moutse Health Forum plans to deal with**



of the negotiating team. We went there to make our demands as women and rural people," said Matlala.

When their demands were not met, they decided to form the Moutse Health Forum (MHF).

The forum consists of the Rural Women's Movement, the National Education and Health Workers Union (Nehawu), Moutse Civic, the Congress of Traditional Leaders of SA (Contralesa), the Youth Development Forum and local health committees.

**"W**e decided to approach the Philadelphia hospital board, who are responsible for the running of the hospital. We demanded that the board be changed to include elected members from the community," Matlala said.

After negotiations, it was agreed that half the board mem-

bers would be people from the Moutse community.

"Our membership on the board will be useful only if we unite on issues and solutions to problems," said Matlala.

Although the Moutse community now have representatives on the board, a lot has still to be changed.

"There is still a shortage of doctors and medicine. The new board has met only once. At that meeting, only one member of the old board attended. But we are lucky because there are members of Nehawu on the board who are willing to help solve the existing problems."

The MHF, together with the new board, plan to train community health workers. They also want to promote community health care.

"Through health education, people will be empowered to deal with health issues.

Community health workers will be based in communities, so women will not have to walk long distances with children on their backs to get to the nearest hospital."

By focusing on prevention rather than the cure of illnesses, community health will reduce the cost of health services and transport, Matlala said.

"Education around family planning, pregnancy, childbirth and contraception is important. Many women die during childbirth and pregnancy. This problem is worse in rural areas because of the lack of health care services. The number of deaths can be reduced through community health care.

"When women are empowered to deal with their own health, they can participate more actively in the social, political and economic life of the community," she added.

**W**ater also plays an important role in a community's well-being.

"You cannot expect people to be in good health if they do not have a supply of clean water. At the moment we don't have enough water taps. Women, even those who are pregnant and old, have to walk long distances to fetch water," said Matlala.

Other issues that the forum and the board deal with include nutrition, sanitation, immunisation, general illness and injuries.

"It is women and children who suffer the most when the health care system is bad. We want to raise the health status of people in Moutse, especially that of the woman and child," Matlala said. ☉

# The porn debate

Should we unban pornography in this new South Africa?

This is one issue we must debate now.

*Colleen Howell* looks at the different arguments



**Y**ou are walking down the street. On both sides, on big billboards, are pictures of naked women — advertisements for pornographic movies. You walk into a shop selling magazines. Again there are pictures showing women being tied up, beaten ... and supposedly enjoying it. In many countries, where pornography is allowed, this is a reality.

Should it be allowed in the new South Africa? The bill of rights in the new constitution guarantees many rights that have been denied people in South Africa before. All people now have the right to be treated equally. There shall be no discrimination on the grounds of, for example, race, language, class, gender, disability or religion.

The constitution says every person's dignity must be respected and protected. All people also have the right to freedom of speech and political activity.

The right of women to be treated as equals is therefore generally guaranteed under the new law.

But many people are worried that practices and attitudes which discriminate against women will continue to grow in

## What is pornography?

**The dictionary says pornography is the description or image of sexual acts in media like magazines, books and films. This is a very broad explanation and does not really explain why many people find pornography insulting to women.**

**Feminist writers say that there is a difference between what is called erotica, and pornography. Erotica, they say, shows people in a sexual way which does not degrade and humiliate them in any way and which presents men and women as equal participants in a sexual act.**

**Pornography, on the other hand, shows people in a sexual way, particularly women, in positions where they are being humiliated, abused and exploited. For example, many pornographic images show women's bodies being cut and tied up in painful and degrading positions. Those who benefit from pornography, often wrongly claim that women enjoy being raped, battered or humiliated.**

South Africa. One concern is that the pornography industry could grow in this country. Until now, pornography has been banned. Ironically, this industry may be able to use the new democratic laws to promote itself and make a lot of money from pornographic material.

But there is serious concern that making pornography legal could promote violence against women.

This is because pornography projects violence against women as sexually exciting and accept-

able. It undermines women's dignity.

It is also argued that pornography strengthens racist attitudes. Much of the pornographic material in the United States of America shows white men raping, beating and humiliating black women.

Although it is difficult to prove how much pornography affects people's behaviour, history has shown that discrimination against particular groups of people has been strengthened by pictures showing those people as



**Your body**

*Pornography*

**is a**

*degrades*

**battleground**

*women*

lower and powerless. In this country, we have seen how racism against black people was strengthened by images of black people as powerless to control their own lives and being inferior to whites. For example, showing blacks only as workers. These are some of the reasons why many argue that pornography undermines the equality of women.

It is also argued that pornography violates principles in the constitution such as freedom from discrimination, the right to dignity and equality in our society.

Should we just continue to ban it then? It is not that simple.

It has already been said that all people have the right to freedom of expression. This means that every person has the right to have their own ideas and beliefs and to be able to express them. Under apartheid this basic human right was denied. Harsh laws were placed on what people could say, read, watch on television or in films. Censorship was an important tool used by the apartheid government to keep minority rule and to control the lives of individuals.

If we are to build a culture of human rights in South Africa and protect the rights of all people, then this kind of control over people's lives must stop.

For this reason, many argue that pornography should not be restricted because people have a

**There is no place in a democracy for the same laws which existed under apartheid, but there is also no place for practices which exploit and degrade any group of people**

time make sure that women do not continue to be abused, violated and exploited?

There are many different opinions on how we can deal with this problem and it will be up to women to make their voices heard on this issue.

Some argue for laws which restrict the development and distribution of pornographic material. Others say this would be a

form of censorship which would restrict people's right to freedom of expression and may not in any way solve the problem. In the past, they say, although heavy restrictions on pornography existed, people still had access to it. So, will restrictions prevent the pornography industry from growing in South Africa?

Whichever way we look at it, a lot of work has to be done to change existing attitudes towards pornography.

The ideal would be a society where no-one would want to read or look at pornographic material. That might not be possible.

We must educate people about why pornography offends women and how it badly affects human sexuality.

Moreover, by empowering women and providing them with skills and courage to take control of their own lives, we can challenge images which show them as sex objects and passive. ☆



right to read and see what they want.

There is no place in a democracy for the same laws which existed under apartheid, but there is also no place for practices which exploit and degrade any group of people.

How can we ensure that people's right to freedom of expression is respected but at the same

# From domestic to dancer

**When Lucy Msomi heard Indian classical music, her feet started to move. And it did not end there. Rosalee Telela found out what happened**

**A** woman stands outside hanging washing on the line. But her mind is not on the domestic work she is paid to do.

Lucy Msomi is dreaming about dancing in a Punjabi to soft Indian music in front of thousands of people. She can hear and see them applaud her performance. She can see the surprise on some of their faces that an African woman can perfect an Indian dance.

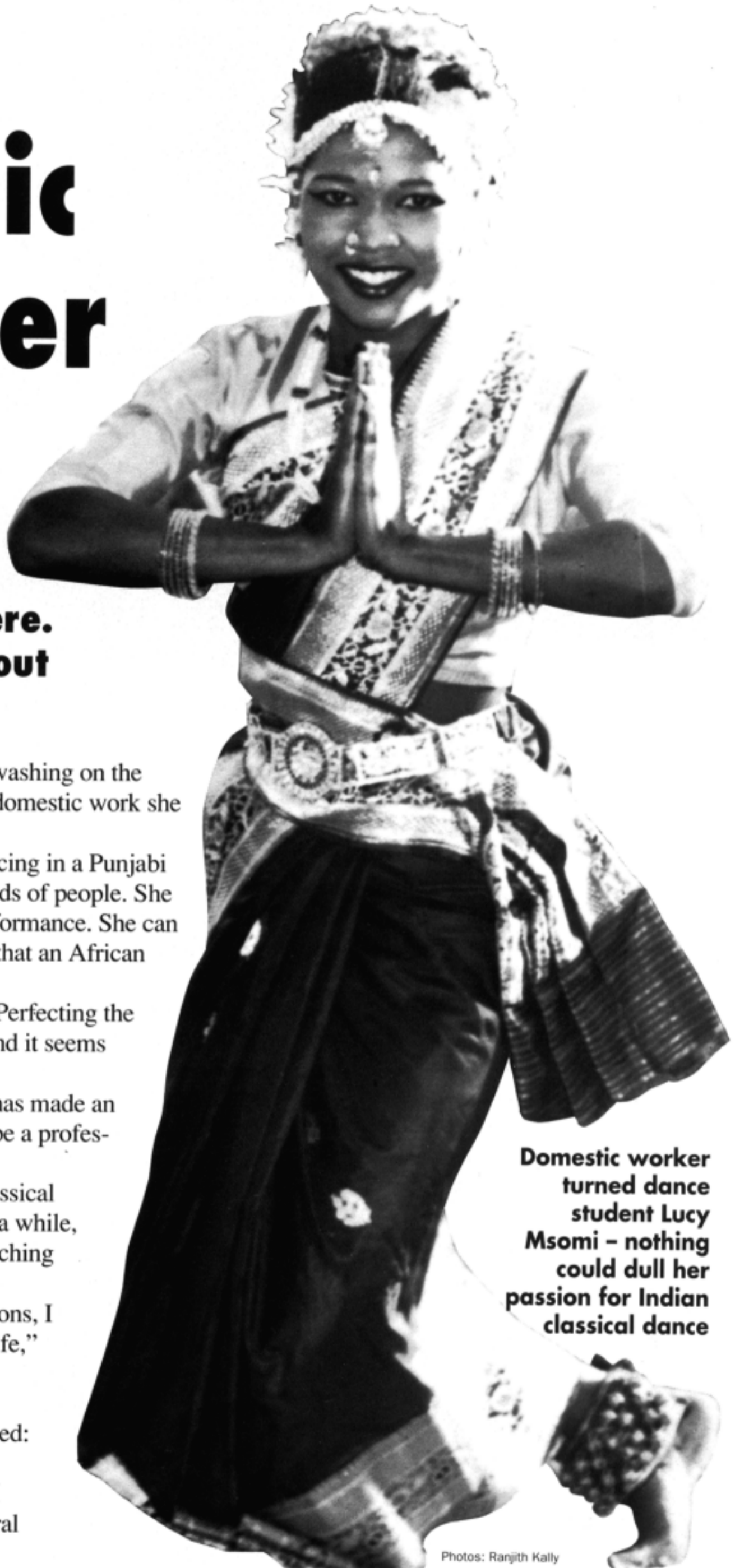
For Msomi this is not just a dream. Perfecting the Indian dance is what she is aiming at and it seems nothing is going to stop her.

Msomi (20) from Tongaat in Natal has made an unusual career choice — she wants to be a professional Indian dancer.

After she fell in love with Indian classical dancing, she began taking lessons. For a while, on her days off work, she had been watching pupils of the dance practice.

“Since I began taking the dance lessons, I feel I have achieved something in my life,” says Msomi.

Kumari Ambigay, Msomi’s teacher, remembers the first time her pupil danced: “Lucy took a liking to the dancing and asked if it was possible for her to join. I know that all African people have natural



**Domestic worker turned dance student Lucy Msomi — nothing could dull her passion for Indian classical dance**

Photos: Ranjith Kally

rhythm, so I asked her to do one or two steps. She was absolutely beautiful.”

Ambigay, who runs an Indian classical dance school, told Msomi that Indian classical dance was difficult and takes a long time to learn. “I saw what they were doing was difficult, but I was determined to try it out,” Msomi says.

Her second lesson was on a Saturday and Msomi showed up dressed in her Punjabi outfit, ready for the big step.

“The first time I went into that dance class I just simply loved it,” she says.

**M**somi is learning a difficult dance called Bharatha Natyam. This is one of the most famous dances in India.

Although Msomi was different from the rest of the class because she is older, African and speaks very little English, Ambigay says she fitted into the class easily.

“Dancing is international. All you have to do is understand the rhythm. Also, my pupils do not know the languages where the dance came from, so Lucy is not that different from them,” she said.

Msomi herself does not feel threatened or shy by being different. “I feel comfortable and I believe that, if one wants to do something one has to start somewhere — even in a class full of young girls.”

Her mother is pleased with what her daughter is trying to achieve. “My mother said she would not stand in my way and would support me in any way she can.”

Msomi says although her partner wants to have children,



**Lucy Msomi with her dance teacher, Kumari Ambigay**

she is not yet ready for such a commitment: “If I had a child now, I would have to give up dancing.

“He knows what dancing means to me and has agreed to wait.”

Although her mother and partner support her dancing, she said some people are against it: “They say I should not do something that is outside the African or Zulu culture. They call me a fool.”

But Msomi does not let them get her down.

“People have to realise this is something I want to do with all my heart and nothing is going to stop me. Those who say this do not understand what dancing, no matter in what culture, is all about.”

For her, a successful career in Indian dancing is not impossible. Ambigay explains: “Forty

one of my former pupils now run dancing classes. My son and daughter who were students in Indian classical dancing are now full time performers.”

**A**lthough Msomi has almost finished her basic training, she still has a long way to go.

“It takes five years to complete the course. Lucy has to know eight different dances in order to graduate. Then I will take her to India to learn more,” Ambigay explained.

Msomi can’t wait to dance her way to India. “It will be wonderful to travel to the country where the dance I do comes from. I want to show them that anyone, even a Zulu woman, can learn their dance. I will work very hard to make my dream come true.” ★



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- c. Dr Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma

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 PO Box 556  
 Johannesburg 2000



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

## We have moved offices

SPEAK Media Project has joined the Independent Magazines Group together with Learn and Teach, Challenge, Shopsteward and South African Labour Bulletin.

**Our new address is:**

14 New Street South  
 (between Rissik and Eloff)  
 Johannesburg 2001

**SPEAK**  
 Putting women first

**Our new postal address is:**

PO Box 556  
 Johannesburg 2000

**Our new telephone number is:**

(011) 836 5020/9

**Our new fax number is:**

(011) 836 6064

# Breaking an ancient taboo

**The crowd was amazed when the three Cuban women walked onto the stage carrying the sacred drums only men were allowed to play.**

**By Bill Strubbe**



**N**ever before had an all-woman music group played at the music festival in Mantanza, Cuba. Obini Bata made history when they became the first.

When women musicians Obini Bata walked out on stage carrying three familiar drums, the audience was shocked. Until then obini (women) were not allowed to play the bata (the special drums of the Afro-Cuban religion called Santeria).

The tambor bata had never before been heard outside of religious ceremonies and, even more of a sin, the drums were being touched by the hands of women! But, by the time the performance finished, the hall was filled with cheers. The stage was showered with flowers, and famous musicians came back stage to congratulate Obini Bata.

The all-woman group was started by Deborah Mendez, a trained dancer who performed classical Latin American dance, like the rhumba, bolero and tango with Cuba's National Folklorico Dance Company for 25 years.

Five years ago, she asked other performers and friends Eva Despaigne and Mirta Ocanto to make a daring cultural and religious break by forming the band Obini Bata and playing the sacred drums.

"Santeria is an important part of Cuban culture with its roots in Africa," explained Deborah. "In Cuba the drums have always been considered important in religion, but were never seen as cultural music. We wanted to take this out of the religious setting. When the audience sees the drums they believe it will be religious music, but are surprised when we begin playing."

At first, the three determined women came up against much resistance. Several teachers refused to teach the women drumming. Eva, the group's director, said: "One male teacher who had helped us left his job because others objected to him teaching us."

Later the group found out that the teachers taught drumming to several foreign women who paid them in United States dollars.

Obini Bata's main instruments are the tambor bata, the three drums used at Santeria religious ceremonies.

Carried in the hearts and memories of slaves brought to Cuba more than a 100 years ago, the music of the tambor bata brings back the rhythms of speech in the African villages. Like a conversation with six hands, the drums speak a beautiful and mysterious language. The voice is believed to

Photo: Bill Strubbe



**A first for Cuba, Obini Bata, from left to right: Eva Despaigne, Deborah Mendez and Mirta Ocanto**

call down the orishas (spirits) to communicate with human beings.

Deborah plays the *iyá* (the mother), which is the largest of the three drums. The *iyá* is very demanding and tiring to play because it leads the other two.

Mirta Ocanto plays the medium-sized drum, the *itotele*. The small drum, the *okonkolo*, is played by Eva, who is also the main singer. Traditionally, for one week before playing at a religious ceremony, male drummers are not allowed to have sex, and bathe with special herbs. It is also believed that the drums' spirit become weak if a woman touches them, because of her monthly period. The group say this is nonsense.

**"T**he drum is like a child and female hands are also effective. The important thing is to feel the drum. If this bond is not there, no matter how much one wants to play, it will not be possible," said Deborah.

"Traditionally, men sit when playing the drums and sing in a very rough manner. We decided to change the style. We play standing, add more movement and sing with more passion."

Obini Bata often finds work in the tourist hotels

in Cuba and at private parties. But, with food and other goods shortages, Havana's electricity black-outs, and an unclear political future, life in Cuba is difficult. "We hope things will be better for us soon," Deborah said.

The women told a story which went against the sexist view of centuries that women can't play these drums. "We were invited to play at a party and while we were playing, four people were possessed by orishas (spirits). In a way we were surprised, but pleased. It caused conflict because our drums are not the "sacred" drums, therefore they are not supposed to be able to call down the orishas, but they did. Of course, some people said the people were pretending to be possessed."

What seems clear is that, if women playing drums are able to call down the orishas, then the taboo against women drummers at religious functions has to be looked at again.

Santeria priests were against the women playing the drums but the three women feel they are slowly being accepted. As a result of Obini Bata's courage and talent, the enchanting beat of the *tambor bata* can now be heard at the hands of several other female groups in Cuba. ★

**Women in South African rural areas are the backbone of their communities. They walk miles to fetch water and firewood, work the land, bear and look after children and run the households. Trees play an important part in their struggle for survival. But trees are getting more scarce and this is making the lives of rural women tougher.**

*By Rosalee Telela*



# Trees for life

**"F**or women in rural areas, trees are a source of life. They use wood for cooking and building. Other trees provide shade, fruit and medicine," said Zukiswa Shibane, a finalist for M-Net's 1994 Green Trust Awards and a social forestry worker at the Herschel Development Trust in the Transkei.

Millions of South African women collect wood to meet the daily needs of their families and communities.

"More than a third of South Africa's population still depends on traditional energy sources such as wood and dung.

Electricity supplies to rural areas is 20 years behind, and even then people will continue to use wood, at least for cooking," Michelle Nel, an environmental journalist told SPEAK.

In South Africa, most fertile land with healthy trees is owned by the government, big business and rich farmers.

"As a result of apartheid, people were removed from areas which were rich in natural resources, and forced to move to small pieces of poor land where they were crowded like cattle," explained Tsepo Khumbane, winner of M-Net's 1994 Green Trust Award and a field worker for the Environmental and

Development Agency (EDA).

Overcrowding has resulted in a serious shortage of natural resources, like wood and water.

To make things worse, the demand for wood is growing. More and more trees are being cut down and sold to factories to make things like furniture, window frames, pot and tool handles.

**R**esearch on the use of wood in rural areas shows that three million households in South Africa collect firewood daily. As the population increases, so will the demand for building houses and firewood. This is having a serious effect on the environment — and on people's lives.

Shibane explained the extent of the damage:

"When the soil is no longer held in place by tree roots, large



**For many rural people, wood is crucial to their daily lives**

## Wanna go green?

Join in! You don't have to live in a rural area to plant trees. Wherever you live, if you want to be part of making our land green, plant a tree. For more information on tree planting contact the following organisations:

Trees for Africa  
Box 2035  
Gallo Manor 2025  
Telephone: (011) 803 9750

Environmental and Development Agency (EDA)  
Box 62054  
Marshalltown 2107  
Telephone: (011) 834 1905

Africa Tree Centre  
Box 90  
Plessislaer 4500  
Telephone: (0331) 984 220

ECO-LINK  
Box 727  
White River 1240  
Telephone: (01311) 32120

Ministry of Water Affairs and Forestry  
Private Bag X313  
Pretoria 0001  
Telephone: (012) 299 2535

Zamani Agroforestry Project  
Box 108  
Estcourt 3310  
Telephone: (0363) 24752

School of Rural Community Development  
University of Natal  
Telephone: (0331) 955 495

Abalimi Bezekhaya  
37A Somerset Road  
Cape Town 8001  
Telephone: (021) 212 578



Photos: Paul Weinberg



**The demand for wood is increasing. To avoid soil erosion, trees should be replanted**

amounts of it are washed away by rain. The soil runs into the rivers, blocking them and causing them to flood. Whole villages can be flooded. Very few plants can grow in place of the trees because the rain washes away nutrients from the soil.”

Khumbane believes that action must be taken.

“Rural people know no other way of living except living on the land. If we are going to leave the land to be destroyed by burning and cutting trees without any thought for the future, we are heading for a period where there will be no food,” she said.

Shibane said replanting is a must if rural people are to survive. “We are not saying people should not use trees. But if trees are not replanted, the soil will be so eroded it will not produce

food.”

This is why organisations like the Herschel Development Trust, EDA, Plant for Life, Eco-Link and others have social forestry projects to help raise awareness and encourage tree planting.

“Social forestry is accepted by many as a way to meet people’s energy demands, fight erosion, increase agricultural production and provide employment opportunities. It is a way of involving local people in growing trees and food for their own use,” said Nel.

**“W**hen social forestry projects are established in rural communities, women will spend less time collecting wood and suffer less health problems from carrying heavy loads for long distances,” she added.

Shibane has planted 12 000 young trees in her nursery. Involving children is very important, she believes. “Our programme teaches school children how to plant trees from seeds and cuttings. They are learning from an early age to respect life,” she said.

Khumbane is also involved in tree planting projects. “We encourage individuals and communities to start home gardens. They decide what kind of plants and trees would best suit their needs.”

But it not enough just to plant trees. “You have to take care of them so they can grow and bring the many benefits that tree planting can give. Trees need water, plenty of light, nourishing soil and protection while they are small,” said Nel. ☀

# Women in power

On August 9 1956, thousands of women marched to the apartheid government's Union Buildings in Pretoria to protest against pass laws. Now, more than 40 years later, women are part of the new government. Does this mean the struggle for women's rights is over? Will women in parliament continue fighting for women's voices to be heard?



**W**hen State President Nelson Mandela opened parliament, he promised women that the government would address their needs. "The objectives of the Reconstruction and Development Programme will not have been realised unless we see in practical terms the condition of women in South Africa changing for the better, and that they have the power to intervene in all aspects of life as equals," Mandela said.

He also said a gender commission would be formed and plans for affirmative action programmes for women in all government departments would be put in place.

Although the President has come out strongly in support for women's rights, the higher structures of government remain male-dominated.

There are only two women in the 30-member

cabinet — Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma (Minister of Health) and Stella Sigcau (Minister of Public Enterprises). There are three women Deputy Ministers — Winnie Mandela (Arts, Culture, Science and Technology), Thoko Msane (Agriculture) and Sanki Nkondo (Welfare and Population Development).

The premiers in all nine regions are men and, of the 90 senators, only 16 are women.

In parliament, however, the picture is different. Our new parliament now has 106 women out of 400 MPs. South Africa has shifted from number 141 on the list of countries with women in government to number seven.

It is also encouraging that Frene Ginwala was appointed speaker of parliament — the first woman to hold this position.

Already, it has been said that parliamentarians are careful about the language they use.

## Stella Sigcau, Minister of Public Enterprises



**SPEAK:** Do you see the economic empowerment of women as important?

The economic empowerment

of women is a priority. In my department, there are very

few women on the board of directors and a lot needs to be done to change this. All government and semi-government enterprises are starting affirmative action training programmes. I'm going to make sure there are a fair number of women, from both rural and urban areas, in these programmes.

There will also be marketing and management training for women living in rural areas.

This training will have to go hand in hand with providing people with resources to

improve their lives, such as electricity, water, etc. Let the burden of women looking for wood be cut.

The mistake in the past was to teach women skills without having a market for their products.

Women's organisations will play an important role in putting women forward for training.

**SPEAK:** What does August 9 mean to you?

It is a day we celebrate the valuable role women have played in our struggle. This year, National

Women's Day must be a huge celebration and must be used by women to discuss the role they are going to play in building our country.

**SPEAK: Do you have a message for our readers?**

Women are a powerful force in South Africa and, in knowing that, women can help make our country a better place to live in.

## **Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma, Minister of Health**



**SPEAK: How did you feel when you were appointed?**

At first I was shocked, it was completely unexpected.

It is a very big responsibility that rests on my shoulders. But I am excited, particularly because the important role women played in the struggle was recognised.

It is a challenge that must be tackled in a collective way.

**SPEAK: You have already made health care free for pregnant women and young children. Will free health care be made available for other things like pap smears and check-ups for breast cancer?**

The National Family Planning Programme provides free services to all women. Women using contraceptives are given a full medical examination every year — which includes examination of the breasts.

Pap smears will only be taken in high risk cases. Because it is not financially possible, a



**The historic women's march on the Union Buildings in 1956**

national screening programme for all women in South Africa is not in place.

## **Thoko Msane, Deputy Minister of Agriculture**



**SPEAK: Did your appointment come as a surprise to you?**

Yes, it did. When I heard

about it, I had mixed feelings. On the one hand, I felt happy and proud to be representing women, on the other hand, I saw it as a challenge.

**SPEAK: Do you plan to involve women more in agricultural planning?**

Women are already involved in agriculture. The most important thing is the lack of services in rural areas. We need a joint approach to deal with this.

**SPEAK: Do you have a message for our readers?**

My appointment should not be seen as an individual thing. If it is to mean anything, women on the ground must get involved. After all, small-scale farmers mainly come from the rural areas and most are women.

Agriculture is an economic tool to help build the economy of the country.

Younger women must look at agriculture as a subject to study at tertiary level.

## **Sanki Nkondo, Deputy Minister of Welfare and Population Development**



**SPEAK: What will you do to help women who battle to get maintenance for their children?**





**"National Women's Day must be a huge celebration and must be used by women to discuss the role they are going to play in building our country... Women are a powerful force and they can help make our country a better place to live" - Stella Sigcau**

Claiming child support is not the only problem single mothers face. They have to pay high taxes, which is not fair. This and improving the system of claiming maintenance are areas I consider as a priority.

## Joyce Kgoali, Senator



**SPEAK:** What does it mean to be a senator?

It is challenging. One has to deal with men who seem to

be hardline about women's issues. I am a member of the rules committee which sets the code of conduct for the senate. We are only two women out of 15 on this committee. We end up being the watchdogs of women's issues, although men are coming into tune.

**SPEAK:** What do you promise to do for women? It is important that there are

women's structures outside parliament to support what is happening inside parliament.

Without any support from outside, it is pointless. Women parliamentarians must be part of these structures. During breaks in parliament, women must go back and account to these structures. As a trade unionist, I will not forget about women workers and I will go back to the gender committees in the unions.

**Kgoali's message to SPEAK readers is:**

On August 9, we need to wave the flag of women's struggles. Women's issues must be celebrated in a way that is recognised world wide. National Women's Day events need to be attended by all and celebrations must take place throughout the country.

## Phumzile Ngcuka, Member of Parliament



**SPEAK:** Why did ANC women MP's form a women's caucus?

Women played a central role in

bringing the ANC into power. Therefore more women should

have been considered for cabinet and deputy cabinet positions. It cannot be argued that there is a shortage of women leaders.

We believe there is a need for a forum which will make sure the interests of women, both inside and outside parliament, are considered. The women's caucus consists only of ANC women, but we plan to draw in women from other parties.

**SPEAK:** Are you planning to draw men into the caucus?

Men haven't shown much interest but this has a lot to do with everyone being busy.

**SPEAK:** Where to from here?

There is still a lot of work to be done. As long as we feel we are not recognised as equals in society, the struggle will never end. We must not allow the gains women have made in government to determine the pace of our struggle.

## Winnie Mandela, Deputy Minister of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology

*We tried to get comment from Deputy Minister Winnie Mandela. At the time that we went to printers we hadn't received her answers to the questions.* ❄

# Throwing light on

**“Masikhanyise” means “let’s bring light”. And that is exactly what a group of women in Cape Town are doing. They meet three times a week to look at ways of improving their lives. *SPEAK* takes a closer look at the project**

**F**or the past two years, over 100 women from Khayelitsha have been meeting every Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday, to discuss and find solutions to their common problems. The most important thing about Masikhanyise is the community involvement. When the group meets, they talk about women’s health, HIV/AIDS, sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), family planning and child abuse. Here they can share their life experiences, problems in the community and hopes for the future.

The Planned Parenthood Association of South Africa (PPASA) has been part of setting up the project. Their main aim is to empower women through self-help projects. In 1992 a group of women from PPASA went to Khayelitsha to ask women what their needs were.



Photo: PPA

After the survey was carried out, PPASA looked at the most important issues women raised, and went on to launch Masikhanyise. The results helped women work out their programme of action. Today there are four groups in Khayelitsha, each with 25 members.

“The women meet to share ideas and experiences about responsible sexual behaviour, family planning and reproductive rights. They also talk about other social problems such as teenage pregnancies, sexually transmitted diseases, cervical and breast cancer and child sexual abuse,” says project co-ordinator Vivian Gongota.

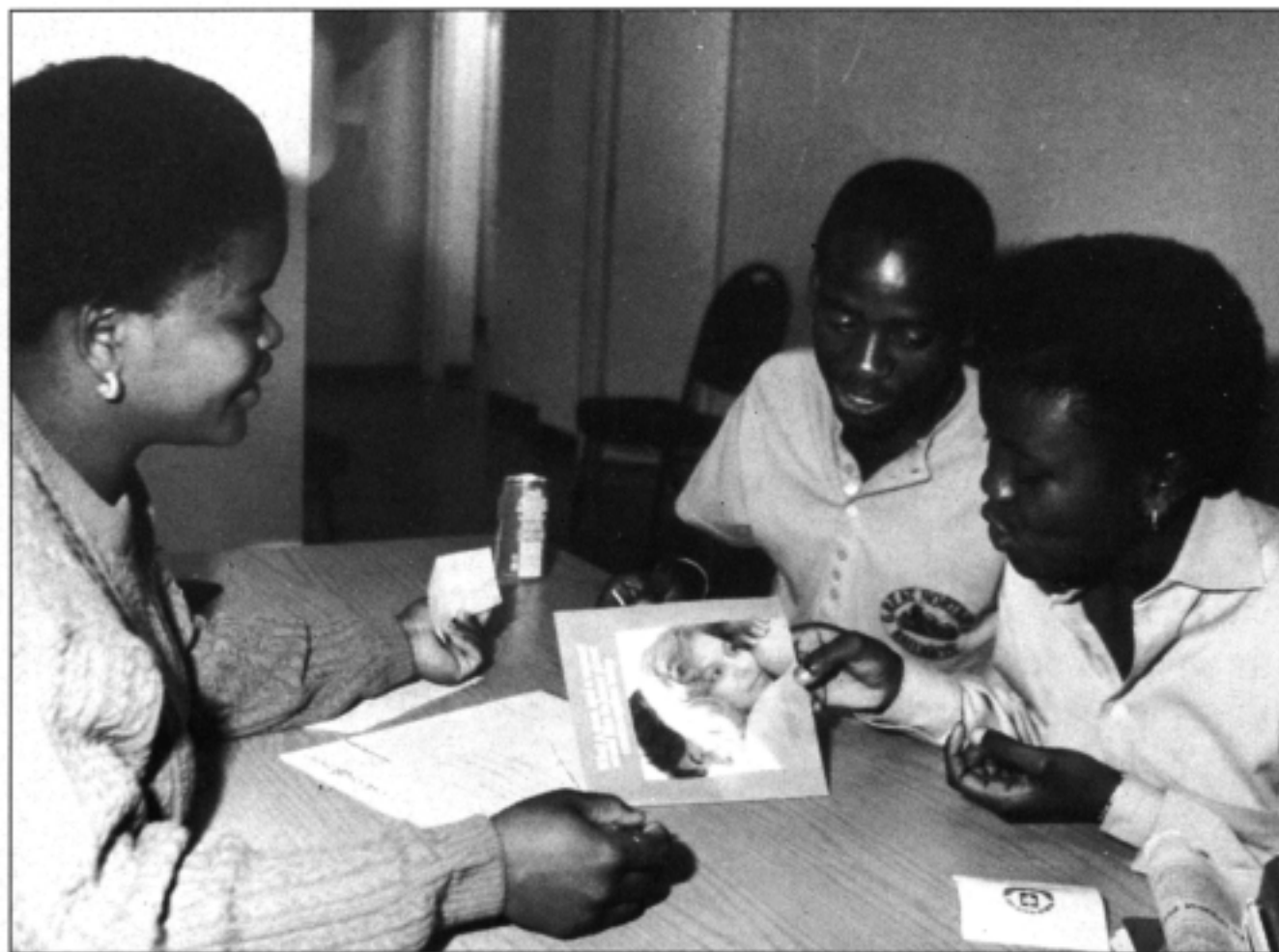
Four field workers assist the women’s groups. After having group discussions, the women go back into their communities to educate people. Sometimes the women go door-to-door to speak about these issues.

## Women in the Masikhanyise group in a discussion on AIDS



These pages have been sponsored by PPASA. The Planned Parenthood Association of South Africa is a national non-governmental organisation working in the fields of family planning, reproductive health and sexuality education. It has branches throughout the country. The telephone numbers of their offices are:  
 Cape Town: (021) 448 7312  
 Durban: (031) 305 2588  
 Johannesburg: (011) 331 2695  
 Lenasia: (011) 852 3502  
 Port Elizabeth: (041) 34 3001

# our lives



## Family planning can benefit both men and women

"The response from the community has been very encouraging," says Gongota.

In May this year, a group of men approached her. They wanted to form a group. They too wanted to talk about issues such as STDs and HIV/AIDS.

"I was surprised when they came to see me, because most men do not worry about such things," says Gongota.

"It is a starting point and with time, more men will become involved. It is a good idea to have programmes aimed at men and women because most men are shy and feel uncomfortable about going to family planning clinics because they are aimed at women only," she adds.

The project also prepares women to be self-reliant by

teaching them skills such as sewing and knitting. Using donated sewing and knitting machines, the women make garments for themselves and their children. They also sell some of the items to other residents at low prices.

"Since I finished my dress-making course, I make clothes for my baby," says Nomzimasi, a member of the project.

Another woman from the group, Mantombi, is using her new skills to improve her home.

"I'm specialising in bed linen. Husbands don't buy linen, they just want to sleep comfortably without thinking of what makes a comfortable bed."

The women from Masikhanyise want to have greater control over their lives. Through this project they feel they have, in some ways, achieved this. They now have confidence in themselves and know what they want for them-

selves, their husbands and children.

Although large families are traditional and contraceptives are rejected, Maxaba says this should change:

"In-laws and church people won't be able to meet the needs of your children. They won't feed, clothe or send them to school. They won't even shelter your big family."

Patience agrees with her and adds: "The information I get here, I pass on to my neighbours and young sisters. I am a victim of teenage pregnancy. I've been through depression and frustrations of being a young mother.

"The most terrible thing for me is that I'm supposed to be a child but, after having a child of my own, I've lost my rights as a teenager," she says.

"Since I joined the Masikhanyise group, I tell people about the benefits of using contraceptives and of having safer sex."

The project is perhaps best summed up by Adelaide, one of the fieldworkers: "When I joined this organisation two years ago, I knew very little about family planning and STDs, and nothing about AIDS, but I received effective training from the PPASA. The training has developed me and, through workshops, women are developing high-quality life skills."

Gongota says working with the project has been very rewarding for her.

"Personally, I feel great. We are on the road to achieving our goals. Women are changing their attitudes and behaviour. I am positive that through such projects we can empower South African women," she said. ☼

# A gold for Africa

Nawal El Moutawakel sets the pace for African sportswomen. Cheryl Roberts met up with her

**T**en years ago, Nawal El Moutawakel of Morocco made history by becoming the first African woman ever to win an Olympic gold medal.

She won the medal for coming first in the 400m hurdles at the 1984 Los Angeles Olympic Games. She was 21 years old at the time.

"Before we left for Los Angeles, I knew that no other African woman had ever won an Olympic gold medal," says El Moutawakel. "I desperately wanted to do something for my country and for Africa. But I knew there was going to be a lot of competition and that anything could happen in the race.

"Our king hosted a farewell party for us. He said he wanted the men and women to bring home gold medals for Morocco. I looked around and realised that this had to be me, as I was Morocco's only woman athlete. So the pressure was really on me," she says.

She was ranked number eight in the world, certainly not a favourite to win the gold medal. But she knew she could surprise a lot of people.

El Moutawakel took up the

challenge, never gave up hope throughout the race and went on to win the 400m hurdles. This was the first time women had run the event at the Olympic Games.

Winning a gold medal was not just a victory for herself, but for all African women.

The Moroccan says she owes her success to her late father, who encouraged her to take up athletics at an early age.

"He used to take me running on the beach with my brothers when I was a child," she says. When she was 15, the Moroccan Athletics Federation spotted her and, two years later, she was included in the national team. Because of a lack of competition at home, she moved overseas.

"The coach said I had the talent to become an international athlete," remembers El Moutawakel.

Her family supported her and, through hard work and a tough training programme, she prepared herself for the ultimate challenge, the Los Angeles Olympics.

The death of her father and her university teammates in a



plane crash after the Olympics, made it difficult for El Moutawakel to concentrate on her running. Three years after her Olympic triumph, she decided she had had enough of international athletics.

**"W**hen I lined up at the start of the 400m hurdles event at the 1987 World Athletics Championship, I did not feel right. As the starter signalled for us to begin the race, my legs failed to move. I stood in my starters block and just could not run. I knew that I had lost the feeling to run.

"So I quit and returned home, confident that I had made the right decision."

When an athlete wins an Olympic Gold, she becomes the pride of the nation. El Moutawakel became a national

Photo: Associated Press



**Moroccan Nawal El Moutawakel at the 1984 Los Angeles Olympics where she became the first woman from Africa to ever win an Olympic Gold medal**

● The Ancient Greeks first started the Olympic Games in honour of the Greek god, Zeus. The first Olympiad (Olympic Games) ever written about was held 776 years before Christ, in the Ancient Greek city of Olympia. Only men took part and only men watched. The ancient games were held every four years for 1500 years before they stopped.

The Olympic Games started up again in 1896 in Athens, Greece. Since then the

Olympics have been held every four years — except in 1940 and 1944 because of the Second World War. More and more countries have taken part in each Olympic Games.

In 1964, South Africa was thrown out of the Olympics because of its apartheid policies. South Africa returned to the Olympics, which were held in Barcelona in 1992. The next Olympic Games will take place in 1996 in Melbourne, Australia.

hero. But this put so much pressure on her to remain the best in the world. She could not cope.

A mother of two young children, El Moutawakel (31) is now assistant technical director of the Moroccan Athletics Federation. She is disappointed that no Moroccan woman has won a gold medal after her. She is doing all she can to encourage women to take athletics seriously.

She has already succeeded in bringing back retired women athletes. This, she says, has proved very helpful, especially for younger athletes who need role models.

**A**bout Africa's athletics future, she says: "I think we have a very good future ahead of us. We have the talent to make us the top sports continent. All we have to do is

make it happen."

El Moutawakel has shown that African women, like their male counterparts, have the talent to compete and reach the highest levels.

Ten years after her victory in Los Angeles, El Moutawakel remains a role model for millions of African women and girls who participate in sport against all odds. ♣

# Get active Get AIDS aware

**E**verybody can do something to prevent the spread of HIV and AIDS, say Bungani and Ramburuth, who work at the national office of the National Progressive Primary Health Care Network's (NPPHCN) National AIDS Programme (NAP) in Johannesburg.

They say urgent action is needed to avoid the tragedy of the AIDS epidemic. The government, bosses, non-governmental and community organisations, trade unions and individuals all need to develop plans around AIDS and put them into action.

AIDS organisations are doing something at a national level. According to Ramburuth, governmental and non-governmental AIDS organisations have joined forces in the National AIDS Co-ordinating Committee of South Africa (Naccosa). NAP is part of Naccosa. Naccosa made suggestions to be included in the government's Reconstruction and Development Plan (RDP).

"When we offered our plan to those working on the RDP, we said that, like gender issues, HIV/AIDS needs to be dealt with in every section of the RDP. We did not want HIV/AIDS to be seen as just a health department issue. Every department needs to consider how they will deal with

**Unless serious action is taken, more than one quarter of South Africans will be HIV positive by the year 2010. What can be done to stop this? *SPEAK* asked Mbulelo Bungani and Shan Ramburuth of the National AIDS Programme**



HIV/AIDS," Ramburuth says.

NAP believes HIV/AIDS is one of the biggest threats to the success of the RDP.

"HIV/AIDS is a problem that the country will have to face squarely. By the turn of the century, HIV/AIDS will have made a big impact on the economy and health services."

**W**hat does this mean for us? We asked Bungani to talk more about what this means for us. "Most people infected with HIV are in the 20-39 age group," says Bungani. "This is the most productive age group and if many

working people in that age group are affected it will have a great impact on our economy. Many people will get sick, many will die and there will be a big drain on medical resources. Also, if South Africa goes the way other African countries have gone, investment might also be threatened.

"The RDP says there needs to be mass education programmes. This involves changing attitudes and behaviour."

"Dealing with how people feel about death and disease, sexuality and more sensitive issues is just as important. You have to get people to think and talk about this," adds Ramburuth.

Bungani believes it is impossible to change attitudes overnight. But it is important to start with the youth. "We would like to see HIV/AIDS as part of programmes run in our schools. Sexuality, gender and relationship issues must be talked about openly," he says.

Most men are raised to believe they should have power over women. How does this affect the spread of AIDS?

**R**amburuth believes this system, called patriarchy, is a reason why HIV/AIDS is spreading faster. "Because of the position women find themselves in as a result of patriarchy, their sexual relationships and power is also limited. One has to deal with that in order to deal with the issue of AIDS," he says.

Bungani adds that there have been no visible campaigns to address this.

"Our attitude needs to change as men. We need to be more sensitive, respectful and respon-

sible in our relationships. The tradition of men having many sexual relationships to prove they are men needs to be looked at in the light of HIV/AIDS. Those men who continue to have many relationships with women need to take protective measures to protect their partners and themselves."

**R**amburuth agrees: "Men need to open themselves up. They need to question the way they have thought of themselves as men, how they see women and how they behave in relationships. They have to do this in a serious way. The HIV epidemic demands this of us." ★

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

- National office:** (011) 337 8539
- Eastern Transvaal:** (01315) 41 181
- Northern Transvaal:** (01521) 91 4221
- Southern Transvaal:** (011) 337 7126
- Orange Free State:** (057) 396 5509
- Natal:** (031) 301 2582
- Natal Midlands:** (0331) 45 0453
- Northern Natal:** (0354) 74 181
- Border:** (0431) 43 6733
- Eastern Cape:** (041) 41 1618
- Transkei:** (0471) 31 0757
- Western Cape:** (021) 696 4154

**CARRIED DISEASES**

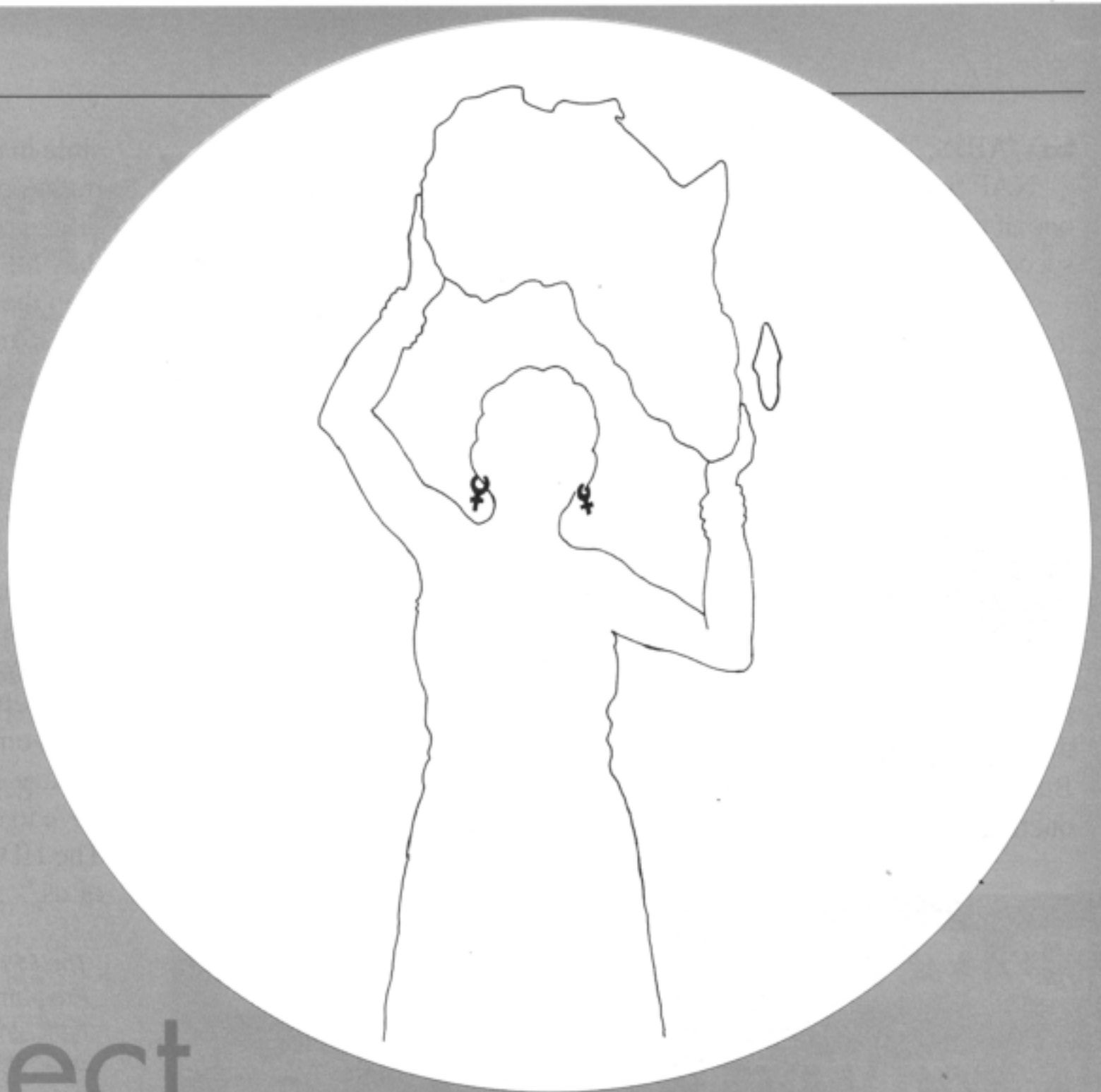
**★ IF YOU HAVE MORE THAN ONE PARTNER**

**USE CONDOMS!**

**S TOGETHER!**



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



# Respect

What you don't understand, sister  
is that women are respected in Africa  
Oh yes  
We call a woman the light of house

She is the one who fetches water  
She is the one who cooks the food  
She is the one who gives milk and brings in  
wood  
She is the one who we come to  
when we need satisfaction  
We know where the light comes from  
Women are respected

Is that so brother?

Is that why she is the last to drink from the  
gourd?  
Is that why she is the last to eat from the bowl?  
Is that why she is the last to sleep and the first to  
rise?  
Is that why she is the one for whom the only  
satisfaction

is another mouth to feed?

And tell me brother

If the woman is the light of the house  
where does the darkness come from?

What will happen if the light fades  
or simply refuse to shine?

Then sister  
It must be made to shine again  
or cast out  
A light that does not shine is of no use to  
anyone

I see

Good, I knew you would understand  
In Africa, sister, women are respected

**by Jeanette Cross**



# Checking for breast cancer

**Most lumps women feel in their breasts are not cancer, but some are.**

**SPEAK looks at breast cancer**

## ● What is cancer?

**Our bodies are made up of cells which divide. This is natural. But sometimes the cells start to divide in an uncontrolled way and a tumour or growth forms. If the growth stays where it is and does not spread it is called 'benign'. This means it is not cancer and can be removed easily. If, however, it spreads through the lymph vessels and blood to other parts of the body, it is called malignant or cancer.**

In South Africa, one in every 15 women stands a chance of getting breast cancer. According to the Cancer Association of South Africa, the number of women, especially young women, getting breast cancer is increasing. It is important that all women keep in touch with their bodies and changes which may occur.

### Be aware

A woman's breasts are naturally lumpy. They can also change size when weight is gained or lost. A woman's breast can change after breastfeeding. Many of these changes are normal and should not cause worry.

### Keep healthy — breast self-examinations

The Cancer Association of South Africa says women should examine their breasts themselves every month and go to a doctor once a year for a breast examination.

The best time for a woman to examine her breasts is straight

after her monthly period.

Women who do not get periods, should do it on the first day of every month.

*See our drawing on how to do a breast self-examination.*

All breasts are naturally lumpy because they are made up of tiny bags and pipes that make milk. Many women worry that painful, lumpy breasts are a sign of breast cancer. This is usually not true. Many women have painful breasts, especially before and during their monthly period.

When doing a breast self-examination, look out for these changes:

#### On your breast:

- A change in shape or size;
- A change in the look of the skin on your breast. For example, if it gets dimples on it and looks like the skin of an orange;
- Lumps or thickening anywhere on your breast.

#### On your nipple look out for:

- A discharge of blood, water, pus or milk (if you are not breastfeeding);
- Whether the nipple pulls in (becomes inverted);
- Whether there is a rash on or around your nipple;
- A lump or thickening;
- A change in the feel and look of your nipple.

#### On your arm look out for:

- A swelling of your upper arm;
- A swelling in your armpit or above your breast.

If you find any of these, do not panic. It may not necessarily be cancer. There are other diseases and problems which can cause these. But if you do discover a new lump or change which does not go away, go to a doctor or clinic for advice. The doctor may do a biopsy —

where some breast tissue is removed so the cells can be examined under a microscope to see whether it is benign or malignant.

### **Mammograms**

Mammograms are another way of testing for abnormal lumps in the breast. Mammograms are a type of X-ray. They are expensive and are usually only done on women who are at high risk of breast cancer.

### **Who can get breast cancer?**

All women have a chance of getting breast cancer but some women have a greater chance than others. Those more likely to get breast cancer are women who:

- Are over 50 years old;
- Have never given birth to children or who have had children after the age of 35;
- Have a close female relative, like a mother or sister, with breast cancer;
- Began to menstruate at a very early age, like under twelve years old;
- Started their change of life (menopause) late in life;
- Are very overweight.

### **Dealing with breast cancer**

If a woman has breast cancer there are different steps to take, depending on how far it has spread. In some cases, surgeons may feel it is necessary to remove the lump in a small operation (a lumpectomy) or to remove the breast in an operation called a mastectomy. In other cases, chemotherapy (treatment with anti-cancer drugs) or radiotherapy (treatment with high energy rays like



**Many women are too scared to examine their breasts. Try not to be scared and make it part of your life. If there is something wrong, the earlier you find it, the easier it is to treat**

X-rays) may also be used.

Whatever happens, a woman has a right to decide what treatment she wants.

### **Prevention is better than cure**

Many health workers believe there is a strong link between leading a stressful life and getting cancer. When you are stressed, your ability to fight disease is lessened and your body is more open to getting sick. Try to deal with stress in such a way that it does not take over your life. Work through issues and train yourself to be a calm person. Don't take on all the work at home — share it with others. Take time to relax and exercise every day, whether it is to read a book or sit quietly on your own. Even dancing

around a room to music you love is good for you! Try to always get a good night's sleep.

### **Eat right**

We know that it is easy to say 'eat right' but not easy to do if you do not have the money. Try to have a balanced diet.

- Cut down on foods which have preservatives, like artificial colouring or flavouring. Tinned foods usually have lots of preservatives;
- Eat raw, clean vegetables and fruit;
- Buy brown or wholewheat bread;
- Cut down on red meat and try to eat more chicken and fish;
- Cut down on salt;
- Eat foods with vitamin C, for example, oranges, carrots and broccoli;
- Stop smoking and cut down on alcohol intake;
- Cut down on the amount of fat you eat. Breast cancer is far more common in countries where people eat a lot of fat.

Many women are too scared to examine their breasts. Try not to be scared and just make it part of your life. The earlier you find something wrong, the easier it is to treat. You may never find something wrong — but at least you are in touch with your own body. ★

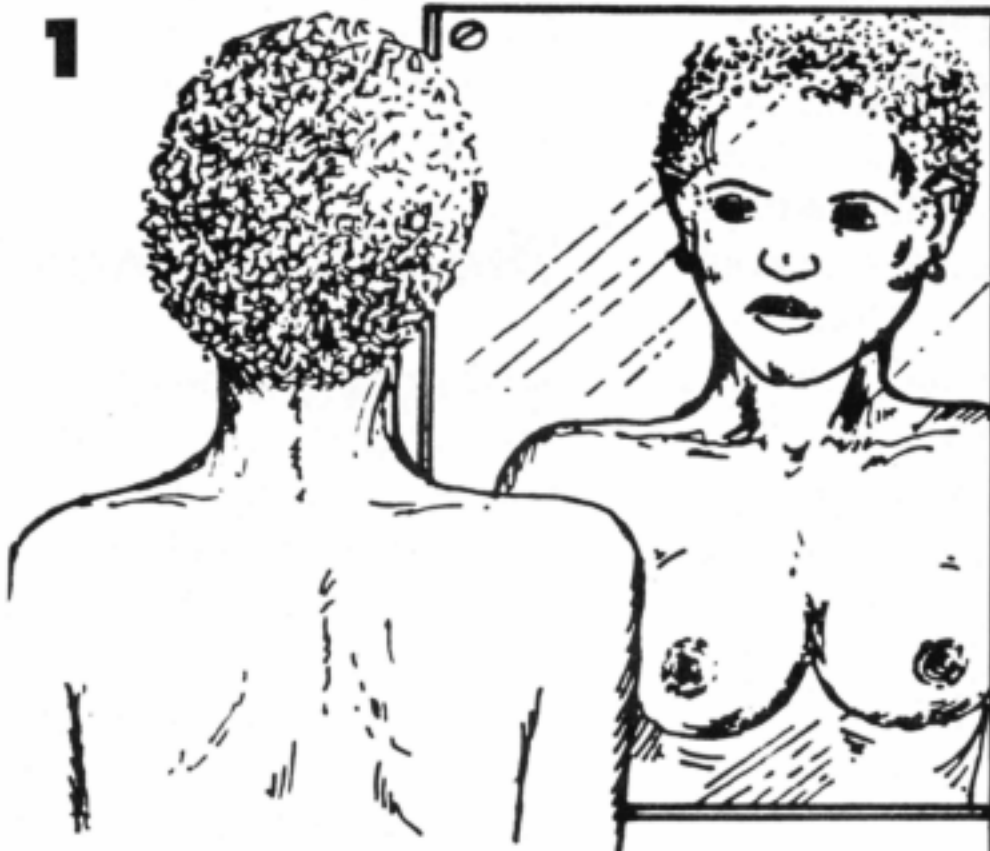
*It is National Cancer Week from 31 July to 7 August this year. There is a special focus on breast cancer (See page 35).*

*Reach for Recovery is a support group for women who have breast cancer. For more information write to:*

*The Cancer Association of South Africa, PO Box 2000, Johannesburg, 2000. Or phone your local Cancer Association of South Africa branch. You can ask them to send you pamphlets*

# Examine your breasts every month after your period

**1**



Look at your breasts in front of a mirror. If your breasts look different, you must go to a doctor

**2**



Lie in the bath or lie back in bed. Use your right hand to feel your left breast, and then your left hand to feel your right breast

**3**



Start at the outside of your breast. Roll the breast under your fingertips, move down and inwards until you have felt all of your breast. Don't forget to feel over the nipple

**4**



If your breasts are big then use both hands to examine. Roll the breast between your fingertips

## SIGNS

- Go to the clinic if you feel any new lumps in your breasts
- Go to the clinic if you find blood, milk (unless you are breastfeeding), or pus coming out of the nipple;
- Go to the clinic if your breasts suddenly look different

# HEALTH BRIEFS

## Virginity back in fashion

Being a virgin until marriage is back in fashion for both boys and girls in Uganda.

Members of the Young Christian Students of Kampala's Catholic Diocese decided at a recent AIDS seminar not to have sex before marriage. Faced with ever increasing cases of HIV/AIDS, a growing number of parents in Uganda are also advising their children to remain virgins until they get married.

## Can't get contraceptives

Many married women in developing countries want to plan their families but are unable to do so, says the International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF). For example, 21 percent of Nigerian women and 40 percent of women in Togo want to use contraceptives but can't get them.

## STD's trap teens

In recent years, the number of teenagers suffering from sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) has increased. The World Health Organisation reports that one in every 20 teenagers gets an STD every year. In Brazil, about two percent of the 24 million children who live or work on the streets are believed to be infected with HIV.

## Unwanted pregnancies

Teenage pregnancies are often unplanned and unwanted. In Algeria and Morocco, for example, 2 000 unwanted babies are abandoned every year by young unmarried mothers. Many young women turn to abortion to avoid being forced out of school or even out of their homes. At the Kenyatta National Hospital in Nairobi, 60 percent of abortion patients are either school girls or unemployed young women. In many developing countries

where safe, legal abortion is not available, the results can be bad. Young women often go for unsafe abortions which result in serious bleeding, pelvic infection, infertility and even death.

## The Pill for men?

An abortion pill, called RU-486, which is available in Europe, is being studied as a possible contraceptive for men. New research showed it stops sperm from fertilising eggs. RU-486 is commonly known as the morning after pill. It produces a complete abortion in 85 percent of women who use it within three weeks after their last menstrual period.



# As a matter of fact...

## Women protest beauty competition

Women's organisations in the Philippines were angry that the Miss Universe Beauty Pageant was held in their country recently. They said beauty contests show women as sex objects and that women are used to sell products. Beauty contests give false hope to the women taking part, say the women's organisations, leading participants to believe the contests are stepping stones to fame, wealth and glory.

## Dads to share the baby work

Sweden decided recently to force fathers to take a month of paternity leave when their baby is born. This is so they can help with the family tasks. Parliament voted the new law in to take effect from 1 January 1995. Under the new law, fathers will lose a right to a generous salary compensation unless they spend that month looking after their baby. At present in Sweden, a mother or father can divide up one year's maternity or paternity leave between them. The state assists with the payment of this leave. The new law states they must both take a month's leave when the baby is born, or they both lose the right to an initial amount worth 90 percent of their salary each for a month.

## Zimbabwe farmer fined

A white Zimbabwean farmer and former member of parliament, Henry Elsworth, was recently fined 1 000 Zimbabwean dollars (about R493) or ten days in prison for forcing a group of women and children to take off their clothes after they were caught stealing firewood from his farm. Elsworth (64), who pleaded not guilty, was convicted by a magistrate in Gweru. He told the court he ordered the women and children to leave an item of clothing which they could collect the next day, after paying a fine. Because of the incident, the government wants to nationalise his four farms. Elsworth will appeal against the conviction and sentence.

## Cosatu's women forums worked

Twelve women, all active in women or gender forums in unions affiliated to Cosatu, were elected to the National Assembly and various provincial legislatures in May. Although this will leave a gap in gender forums in the trade union movement, the majority of those elected have promised to continue fighting in the interest of working class women.



# TAXI TALK

## Filthy sounds

The beat is hip, the beat is hop 'til you stop dead in your tracks when you hear the lyrics, writes *Thenjiwe Nhlapo*

**M**ost rap music makes such insulting remarks about women it makes you wonder whether these artists have mothers or just popped out of the sky. They portray women as throw-away bags of fun.

Some music videos are enough to make your jaw drop. I mean, you see the pelvic area moving like no other has moved or shall move in history.

These, along with other types of media, encourage women to be portrayed in a "use 'em and leave 'em" way. Women are shown as prostitutes, mothers, wives and hardly ever as successful, fulfilled, happy people. If they are successful women, they are made to be seen

as frustrated, lonely souls.

Maybe it is portrayals such as these which make artists and society have such negative views of women. Right enough, we live in a democratic society where freedom of speech is now a given right. But just how far one can go without stripping others of their respect while practising their freedom of speech, has to be examined.

We all have different views, as a friend of mine said, "It's not like they are forced to do the sexy and provocative dances they do."

Another friend added, "the words of the songs are aimed at a particular race". Regardless of this, it still hurts when you hear women being referred to as "bitches,

whores or sluts". But, as Queen Latifah says, "U-N-I-T-Y ...." is what women need to fight against the images and language used to portray them in a negative way.

The media need to play music and show more videos that build the image of women in society. For how long will boys, and girls, repeat the filthy words of some rap music without being influenced by the messages it sends across.

Well, I like rap music but I certainly won't listen to offensive songs. "NA, NA, NA, SIPPING SOME GIN 'N JUICE, LAID BACK", I guess for now I'll have to do without hearing this tune, until some artist comes up with an instrumental version which won't hurt my ears. ☪



**PROPHETS OF THE CITY:** One of the few rap groups who don't insult women. Rather they try to unite South Africans and encourage the youth to get involved in their communities

# NOTICES

## Report on children

The National Children's Rights Committee has released its report on children in South Africa: Situation Analysis Report: Agenda for Action. If you would like a copy, write to:  
P O Box 30803  
Braamfontein 2017  
Telephone: (011) 403-3871/2 or 403-3875  
Fax: (011) 403-3870  
The report costs R15.

## About women's health

The Women's Health Project is offering free copies of The Reproductive Health Policy and Programmes: Reflections On The African Experience. The report was drawn up after the Harare 1993 conference on reproductive health.  
Get your free copy from:  
WHP, Centre for Health Policy  
c/o SAIMR  
P O Box 1038  
Johannesburg 2000  
Telephone: (011) 725-0511

## Gender training manuals

Two gender training manuals are available. *Gender, Development and Power: Some Issues and Methods for Gender Training* costs R12. *Feminist Teaching, Methods for Adult and Popular Educators* costs R10. These can be obtained from:  
Centre for Continuing Adult Education,  
University of Western Cape,  
Private Bag X17,  
Belville 7535  
Telephone: (021) 959-2798/9

## Services for Workers

**HEALTH AND SAFETY** The Industrial Health Unit deals with health and safety issues at the workplace.

If you need more information or free literature, contact the unit at the University of Natal, telephone number: (031) 816 2441

**HEALTH** The Workers' Clinic in Salt River, Cape Town, offers health services every Tuesday and Thursday between 9 am and 6 pm. Their address is:

Industria House  
350 Victoria Road  
Salt River  
Telephone: (021) 478 043

**LITERACY** Wits Workers School provides basic literacy classes and general classes on politics, time management and communication. They also have classes for Standard five, eight and matric students. For more information, contact Sonto Mokgadi at:

Room 201, 2nd Floor  
The Wedge Building, West Campus  
University of the Witwatersrand  
Telephone: (011) 716-3670

## Attention SPEAK readers

Remember that SPEAK's address has changed since we joined the Independent Magazine Group together with Learn and Teach, Challenge, Shopsteward and SA Labour Bulletin.

### Our new address is:

14 New Street South  
(between Rissik and Eloff)  
Johannesburg 2001

### Our new postal address is:

Box 556  
Johannesburg 2000



University of the Witwatersrand  
Johannesburg  
2-4 December 1994

This is YOUR national women's health conference.

Be sure you have a say in it!

Regional preparatory meetings to be held  
For further information, please contact:

Priscilla Pietersen  
Women's Health Project  
Centre for Health Policy c/o SAIMR  
POBox 1038 JHB 2000  
Tel: (011) 725-0511 ext 2119

## Conference on breast cancer

The Cancer Association of South Africa will hold a conference on breast cancer on August 2 1994. The conference is sponsored by Convatec.

For further details, contact Annie at telephone number: (011) 646-5628



# TREES FOR AFRICA

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Trees for Africa's mission is to improve the physical and aesthetic quality of life and conserve the environment for the benefit of all communities in Southern Africa through greening projects supported by environmental education.

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