

**THE LEGACY SERIES**

**"FOR FREEDOM AND EQUALITY"**  
**CELEBRATING WOMEN**  
**IN SOUTH AFRICAN HISTORY**



**WATHINT' ABAFAZI, WATHINT' IMBOKOTHO**

**YOU'VE TAMPERED WITH THE WOMEN**

**YOU'VE KNOCKED AGAINST A ROCK**

THE LEGACY SERIES "FOR FREEDOM AND EQUALITY" CELEBRATING WOMEN IN SOUTH AFRICAN HISTORY

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## FOREWORD - CELEBRATING THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN SOUTH AFRICAN HISTORY AND HERITAGE



Minister Angie Motshekga.

Source: Department of Basic Education.

It gives me great pleasure that since I took office as Minister of Basic Education, my Department is, for the first time, launching a publication that showcases the very important role played by the past valiant and fearless generations of women in our quest to rid our society of patriarchal oppression. While most of our contemporaries across the globe had, since the twentieth century, benefited from the international instruments such as the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights and the Convention for the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), which barred all forms of discrimination, including gender discrimination, we in this Southernmost tip of the African continent continued to endure the indignity of gender discrimination across all spheres of national life. Gender oppression was particularly inhuman during apartheid, where women suffered a triple oppression of race, class and gender.

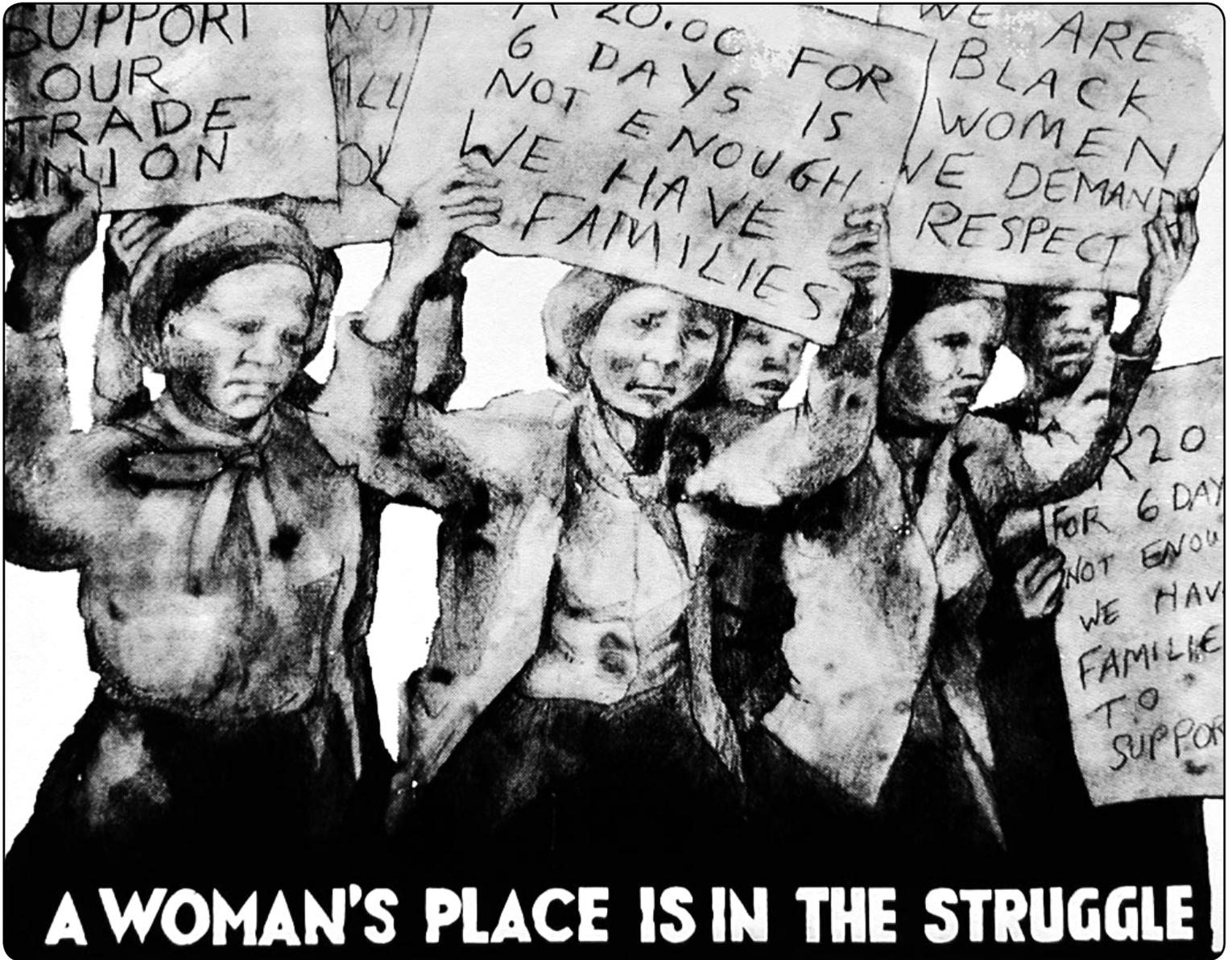
The formal promulgation of the Constitution of the Republic in 1996 was an important milestone, particularly for women, in our new democracy. However, while the Constitution outlawed unfair discrimination on the basis of gender, sexual orientation, and other considerations, it will be disingenuous to suggest that the battle against patriarchy had been won in democratic South Africa. If anything, like racism, the evil of patriarchy still lives amongst us and often within us. It is against this background that we have to be even more vigilant that the gains made in the post-apartheid era are not unwittingly rolled back. Therefore, as part of our history and heritage, it is important to recognise the role played by our predecessors in shaping a better life for all women in this country. Although today their ideal of a non-sexist and gender equitable society is still an elusive goal, these gallant women have laid the foundation from which we can realise their ideals.

There are many other moments in our journey to liberation in South Africa that we can savour, and in doing so, we dare not forget the valiant, fearless, and selfless struggles of the past generations. Hence, we deemed it fitting to launch our first quarterly publication on history and heritage with a dedicated focus on women. In that regard, we pay tribute and celebrate those women who have become an embodiment of our struggle for liberation and gender equality in the current times. The objectives of this publication are two-pronged. First, it profiles biographies of important women figures in our struggle for freedom in general and gender equality in particular. Second, while recognising the important historical figures, it also attempts to foreground contemporary biographies of women who continue to play an important role in advancing the course of women in the post-apartheid period. The biographical representations in this publication are from across the vast spectrum of South African society.

I believe this publication will provide insight into the contribution of various generations of women who took the lead to challenge patriarchy and advance gender equality. It is my hope that this publication would spur you into action, like the many women profiled, in realising a better life for all women in this great country of ours.

**Mrs AM Motshekga, MP**

**Minister of Basic Education**



'A woman's place', 1982, Gaborone, Botswana. Silkscreen by Judy Seidman.

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## INTRODUCTION

**T**he struggle for democracy and gender equality is built on the foundation of struggles by generations of women and men. This booklet examines the women's struggle from the 1950s onwards, with a particular focus on the 1970s to present day. Great leaders and activists emerged in the 20th century. Many women worked hard over long periods at great cost to themselves to help our country to gain freedom from Apartheid.

The profiles of the people in this booklet should encourage us to engage with the heroes of our past to inspire a new generation of women and gender activists to continue the struggle for equality and social justice. Struggle is not easy. As you will see when you read about women from the past, struggle requires service, commitment, self-sacrifice and even suffering.

## DECADE OF THE WOMEN: 1950S

In the 1950s the Women's Struggle in South Africa gained momentum. On 26 June 1955 thousands of women delegates joined men from all across South Africa at the Congress of the People to draw up the Freedom Charter. For the first time in the history of the country a multiracial gathering of men and women agreed on racial equality, human rights and gender equality.

One year later, on 9 August 1956 the militant cry of thousands of black and white women rang out across the grounds of the Union Buildings in Pretoria. They had marched to the seat of the Apartheid government to protest against the hated pass laws and to demand equal rights for all South Africans. They marched singing a song that has become a 'battle cry' of the Women's Movement ever since.

"Strijdom wathint' abafazi, wathint' Imbokotho"

(Strijdom you've tampered with the women, you've knocked against a rock).

The Women's Anti-Pass Campaign and the Women's Charter became the inspiration and benchmark around which decades of women struggled openly, underground and in exile until the realization of our democracy in 1994.

The demands of women for equality have been written into the South African Constitution. However, many challenges still face South African women today; the main challenges include HIV/AIDS, poverty, and lack of education, unemployment and violence against women. Women's voices must be heard at all levels of our political and social lives. The establishment of grass roots organisations and effective research projects will help to ensure that the challenge is met.



### THE 100 YEAR STRUGGLE FOR FREEDOM AND THE ANC WOMEN'S LEAGUE

This booklet was produced by South African History Online (SAHO). It forms part of an online archive on the role of women over a century of struggle, this is important at this time because the African National Congress (ANC) is about to celebrate its 100th anniversary (2012). It is, without question, a momentous occasion in South African and African history. But, the history of the

ANC cannot be separated from the history of a multi-layered liberation struggle. So it is important that we teach about the role that women played as an integral part of our 'struggle history'

In commemoration of the ANC's 100th anniversary this booklet includes a 'Wall of Remembrance' that highlights some of the key women who have played an important role in the 100 year struggle for freedom.



#### DID YOU KNOW

When the African National Congress (ANC) was formed in 1912, it did not accept women as members. At the ANC's 1943 conference women were accepted as members. In 1948 the ANC Women's League (ANCWL) was formed. The first official president of the ANCWL was Ida Mntwana who was appointed after the brief presidency of Madie Hall-Xuma.



9 August 1956, womens' anti pass march to the Union Buildings. This march was organised by FEDSAW and led by Sophie Williams, Rahima Moosa, Helen Joseph and Lilian Ngoyi, seen in this picture. *Photograph by Eli Weinberg, UWC Robben Island, Mayibuye Archives.*

## BACKGROUND AN ERA OF APARTHEID REPRESSION

**T**he year 1960 was a turning point in South African history. It was the year of the Sharpeville Massacre, when 69 men, women and children were killed by Apartheid police outside a police station for resisting the Apartheid pass laws. The aftermath of the Sharpeville Massacre and the declaration of a State of Emergency in March 1960 signaled the beginning of a brutal and intensive phase of state repression against resistance. About 10 000 people were detained. Harsh measures were introduced to deal with those (both black and white) who resisted. After Sharpeville, the Apartheid regime banned the African National Congress (ANC) and the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC).

At this time many people began to feel it was useless for the ANC and PAC to continue using non-violence against a government that responded with violent attacks on unarmed people. By mid-1961, liberation leaders had abandoned non-violent methods of resistance and launched an armed struggle.

The ANC created an underground military wing, called Umkhonto we Sizwe (MK) or the 'Spear of the Nation', launched in December 1961, under the leadership of Nelson Mandela. Men and Women began leaving the country to join MK and train in exile.

Ruth Mompati, for example, left the country and became secretary of the ANCWL in Tanzania in 1962.



...Here, from underground, is Walter Sisulu to speak to you...

*Sons and Daughters of Africa! I speak to you from somewhere in South Africa. I have not left the country. I do not plan to leave. Many of our leaders of the African National Congress have gone underground. This is to keep the organisation in action; to preserve the leadership; to keep the freedom fight going. The struggle must never waver. We of the ANC will lead with new methods of struggle. The African people know that their unity is vital. In the face of violence, many strugglers for freedom have had to meet violence with violence. How can it be otherwise in South Africa?*

Extract of the inaugural broadcast made by Radio Liberation, the ANC's radio station, on 26 June 1963. Sisulu and other leaders were arrested during a raid at Liliesleaf farm less than a month later.



A woman stands alone on the steps of the Palace of Justice with her fist raised in support of her leaders. Rivonia Trial, 1963-1964.  
Source: Pretoria News.



Mayihlome ke Nako ("let us arm, its time"), date unknown. ANC Tanzania, women's armed struggle poster.

The PAC formed an armed wing called Poqo. They are less well-known today but also played an important role in South African history. Robert Sobukwe was the founding president of the Pan Africanist Congress. Some of his ideas later inspired Steve Biko and the Black Consciousness Movement. Sobukwe was put on trial for his role in the anti-pass campaigns of 1960 and sentenced to three years in prison in Pretoria. After completing his three-year sentence, Sobukwe was detained by a special Act of Parliament called the 'Sobukwe Clause', and transferred to Robben Island. He was jailed separately from the other political prisoners.

In August 1962, Nelson Mandela was captured by the police. In June 1963, other MK leaders including Walter Sisulu, Govan Mbeki, Raymond Mhlaba, Dennis Goldberg, and Ahmed Kathrada were arrested in Rivonia, Johannesburg. They were charged and tried in the infamous Rivonia Trial. They were sentenced to life imprisonment in June 1964. The Rivonia Trial had significant short-term and long-term consequences. The Apartheid government was largely able to break the strength of the struggle inside South Africa by imprisoning the leaders of MK and Poqo. For a time, open political activity was nearly impossible.

After the Rivonia Trial and Sobukwe's arrest, organised resistance to apartheid within South Africa slowed down. Many anti-Apartheid leaders and supporters were in jail or had gone into exile. And in the late 1960s Apartheid policies were further tightened by B. J. Vorster, the Minister of Justice (later the Prime Minister).

Out of this vacuum, the late 1960s gave rise to new sources of resistance, mainly in the form of the Black Consciousness Movement and student activism.



## DETENTION LAWS

In 1963, a law which allowed for 90 days detention without trial was introduced. Albertina Sisulu was the first woman to be arrested under this new law. She was placed in solitary confinement incommunicado for almost two months.

In 1965, the 90 day detention period was increased to 180 days. In 1967, the Terrorism Act gave the State even more power to suppress any opposition. New methods of torture in detention were also introduced. These included extended periods of isolation, standing for long hours, sleep deprivation, physical assault and psychological torture. Many women were victims of torture. But the experiences of white and black women were different, as brute force was not generally used against white women.



## CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

### Questions

1. The following list of events is in the incorrect order of time. Refer to the introduction and background sections and arrange the events in the correct time order. Write the list in your notebook.

- ANC and PAC banned
- Women's March to Pretoria
- Sharpeville Massacre
- Black Consciousness Movement gained momentum
- MK and Poqo formed
- Rivonia Trial

2. With your class, make a list of words that could be used to describe:

- a) the Apartheid government
- b) those who stood up against the Apartheid government



Albertina Sisulu, Linden Johannesburg, 2002.  
Photograph by Gisele Wulfsohn.



Albertina Sisulu leads supporters outside the Palace of Justice in a freedom song at the Rivonia Trial, 1963-1964. Source: Pretoria News Library.



## SPECIAL PROFILE

### ALBERTINA SISULU 1918 - 2011

**A**lbertina Sisulu was a political activist and nurse and one of the most important leaders of anti-Apartheid resistance in South Africa. She is often referred to as the 'Mother of the Nation'. She acted on her ideal of human rights throughout her life, assisted by her husband and fellow activist, the late Walter Sisulu (1912-2003).

It was with Walter that she attended the first conference of the ANC Youth League where Albertina Sisulu was the only woman present. In 1948 she joined the ANC Women's League and in the 1950s she began to assume a leadership role – both in the ANC and in the Federation of South African Women (FEDSAW). She was one of the organizers of the historic anti-pass Women's March in 1956 and opposed inferior 'Bantu' education. Her home in Orlando West in Soweto was used as a classroom for alternative education until a law was passed against it.

Both Albertina and her husband were jailed several times for their political activities and they were both constantly harassed by the Security Police.

In the 1960s the ANC moved toward the armed struggle. Umkhonto we Sizwe (the ANC's armed wing) was formed by Walter Sisulu and Nelson Mandela in 1961. Walter was responsible for framing the organizational units of the National High Command, Regional Commands, Local Commands

and cells.

But in 1963 while he was awaiting the outcome of an appeal against a 6 year sentence, Walter decided to forfeit bail, and to go underground. Apartheid Security Police visited Walter Sisulu's house and found that he had fled. Soon afterwards they arrested Albertina and her young son Zwelakhe. She became the first woman to be arrested under the General Laws Amendment Act. The Act gave the police the power to hold suspects in detention for 90 days without charging them. Albertina was placed in solitary confinement incommunicado for almost two months while the Security Branch looked for her husband.

During this time the Security Police taunted her psychologically. She described one of the cruel forms of torture used by her captors - they would come and tell her lies. They told her that one of her children was seriously ill, and that her husband was dying. Because Albertina was cut off from all interaction with the outside world she had no idea that the police had raided Liliesleaf Farm in Rivonia and had arrested her husband and 16 others. She only found out three weeks after she was released from detention.

Just under a year later the Rivonia trial concluded. Six of the accused were sentenced to life imprisonment on Robben Island. Walter was one of them.



Denis Goldberg was also sentenced to life in prison but he went to Pretoria Central Prison instead of Robben Island (at that time the only security wing for white political prisoners in South Africa).



As Walter and his co-accused left the courtroom, Albertina Sisulu, some ANC Women's League members and other supporters rushed out to form a guard of honour to meet the men. The court officials turned them away, but they sang 'Nkosi Sikele i'Afrika' in Church Square in Pretoria in solidarity and mourning.

For her activism Sisulu was detained and put in solitary confinement again in 1981 and in 1985. She also suffered bannings and house arrest, but still managed to keep links between jailed members of the ANC and those in exile.

In 1983 Albertina was elected co-president of the United Democratic Front (UDF), and in June 1989, the government finally granted her a passport. The following month she led a delegation of UDF leaders to Europe and the United States. She met the British Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher and the American President, George Bush Snr. In October 1989, the last restrictions on the Sisulu family were lifted and Walter was released from Robben Island.

In 1994, Albertina Sisulu served in the first democratically elected Parliament. She and her husband and son Zwelakhe have won numerous humanitarian awards. On the 2 June 2011 she died at her Linden home in Johannesburg, aged 92.



## CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

Source: 1



This cartoon was drawn by cartoonist Zapiro just after Albertina Sisulu died. Source: [www.zapiro.com](http://www.zapiro.com).

Source: 2

An article from Eyewitness News published this quote: *During a 1997 interview, she spoke of the difficulty women faced alone during the struggle. "The women of South Africa have been leading the struggle hand in hand with the men. There has never been any difference except that the women's side is more vulnerable to any oppression, the side of their home and the children," she said.* - Source: [www.ewn.co.za](http://www.ewn.co.za)

### Questions:

1. Look at the cartoon and write down all the things the cartoonist is expressing about Albertina Sisulu and her character.
2. Read the excerpt from Eyewitness news.
  - a) What did Albertina Sisulu say about the role of women in the struggle?
  - b) Why did she say that women were more vulnerable than men in the struggle?
3. Write a paragraph entitled "Why Albertina Sisulu was a great leader". Use the information provided in the special profile, as well as the cartoon and the excerpt from Eyewitness News.

## 1970S: SOWETO AND INCREASED PRESSURE ON THE APARTHEID STATE

Stricter apartheid laws were implemented in the 1960s. The Apartheid regime succeeded for a while in repressing resistance in the country. However, in 1973 a series of labour strikes erupted, followed by the emergence of a new movement called Black Consciousness or BCM. There was an increase in youth activism which led to renewed resistance. Women played a large role in the resistance of the 1970s.



University of the Witwatersrand students protest against Apartheid and the education system in the 1970s. Source: Frescura Collection.



University of Cape Town students protest against Apartheid and the education system in the 1970s. Source: Frescura Collection.

### WOMEN AND LABOUR ISSUES: THE TRADE UNIONS IN THE 1970S

In the 1960s, the country's industrial economy had grown and by the 1970s black workers were becoming increasingly restless about exploitative working conditions. A number of strikes were held, particularly in Natal, and between 1973 and 1975 many new trade unions were formed.

Women such as Linda Komape and Emma Mashinini were prominent trade unionists. They fought for the rights of women in the workplace.



### LINDA KOMAPE

1949-

Linda Komape was born in the Transvaal in 1949 and experienced Apartheid at a young age when her father's land and cattle were taken away.

She began work in a factory in 1975. She joined the Metal and Allied Workers Union and played an active part in the strikes of 1976. In 1977, she became an organiser for the Metal and Allied Workers Union, but spent the first months doing odd jobs for men rather than being given a proper role in the Union. She complained and, her activism yielded positive results. The system was changed so that menial tasks in the Union were equally divided between men and women. Komape later moved from organizing to recruiting.

Komape founded the Transport and General Workers Union around 1978. Here she worked to improve wages and conditions and by the time she left membership stood at about 24 000.

From here, Komape began working with a union concerned with the rights of female cleaning staff. She found out that many were sexually harassed at work and had no legal rights. Membership of the union grew to 3 000 and conditions were improved.

In 1984, Komape attended a workshop organised by the Federation of Transvaal Women (FEDTRAW) where she objected to the tradition of 'lobola' as she believed it objectified women.

Throughout her life, Komape campaigned for the rights of women in the workplace.

## WOMEN AND THE BLACK CONSCIOUSNESS MOVEMENT IN THE 1970S

The Black Consciousness Movement (BCM) was led by a man called Steve Biko. The BCM was supported by many female intellectuals, and also appealed to young people. BCM encouraged all black South Africans to recognize their inherent dignity and self-worth. In the 1970s, the BCM spread from university campuses into urban black communities throughout South Africa. A number of women, such as Baleka Kgositsile and Winnie Mandela were active in both the Black Consciousness Movement and the ANC underground.

The South African Student Organisation (SASO), formed in 1968 by Biko was largely responsible for spreading BCM among the youth. Women like Dr Mamphela Ramphele, Nkosazana Clarice Dlamini-Zuma and Sam Moodley were active in this organization.

Along with political action, a major part of the Black Consciousness Movement was its Black Community Programs. These Programmes included organizing community medical clinics, aiding entrepreneurs, and holding “consciousness”

classes and adult education literacy classes.

Biko was banned in 1973. This meant that he was not allowed to speak to more than one person at a time, was restricted to certain areas, and could not make speeches in public. It was also forbidden to quote anything he said, including speeches or simple conversations, or to otherwise mention him. In spite of the repression of the Apartheid government, Biko and the BCM played a large role in inspiring protests, which led to the Soweto Uprising on 16 June 1976.

The State suppression of the BCM after the Soweto Uprising in 1976, and Biko's death while in police custody in 1977, weakened the organizational base of the movement. In addition, all the black consciousness organisations were banned in 1977, including the women's organisations.

Many of BCM's supporters went into exile and the majority joined the ANC and MK in exile. The PAC's Azanian People's Liberation Army (APLA), the successor to Poqo, was also active in exile. However, the ANC's MK grew over the years in international and national stature and became the more powerful liberation movement.



Winnie Mandela talking at the launch Black Women's Federation in Durban, 1975. Source: Bailey's African History Archives.

### BLACK WOMEN'S FEDERATION

In 1975, some of the women supporters of BCM formed the Black Women's Federation (BWF) under the leadership of Fatima Meer. The aim of the BWF was to bring black women together in a broad front to create opportunities for themselves. Another prominent member of this organization was Winnie Mandela.

A year after the formation of the federation, Fatima Meer was banned. The government also banned a meeting that was to be held by the BWF and other anti-Apartheid

organisations in Durban in protest of Meer's banning.

The women of the BWF also expressed solidarity with the youth and supported them in their demonstrations against inferior black education. The first student protests were peaceful, but in 1976, riots broke out in Soweto against the introduction of Afrikaans as a medium of instruction in their high schools. The BWF members were actively behind the students, and when the police opened fire on the students and 13-year-old Hector Peterson was killed, they and others bitterly opposed the brutal police killing of young children.



Fatima Meer, Durban, 2002. Source: Gisele Wulfsohn.



## FATIMA MEER

1928 - 2010

**F**atima Meer was brought up in a family that was highly conscious of racial discrimination and she therefore became a tireless defender of the oppressed. She went to the University of Natal, where she completed a Masters degree in Sociology.

Fatima joined the 1946 Indian Passive Resistance Cam-

paign against Apartheid laws. After tension and rioting between Indians and Africans in Natal, she helped establish the Durban and Districts Women's League to improve relations between Africans and Indians. Her activities led to her banning in 1952.

In the 1970s, when the Black Consciousness Movement was at its height and Fatima Meer was the president of the Black Women's Federation (BWF), she was again banned and was subsequently detained for trying to organise a rally with Steve Biko.

Shortly after her release in 1976, Fatima survived an assassination attempt, when her house was petrol bombed. From the 1980s to the 1990s, she fought tirelessly for the rights of shack-dwellers and rural migrants. She also headed the Natal Education Trust, which built schools in Umhlanga, Port Shepstone and Inanda, and established a Crafts Centre and the Tembalihle Tutorial College in Phoenix.

Fatima Meer wrote more than 40 books on a wide variety of subjects and received many awards during her lifetime. She also worked with non-governmental welfare bodies and served in advisory positions for the new democratic government.

Meer died in March 2010 following a stroke which she had two weeks before her death. She was buried in Durban.



## WINNIE MADIKIZELA - MANDELA

1936 -

**I**n the mid-1950s Nomzamo Winfreda Madikizela became involved in the ANC and she met Nelson Mandela, who was then one of the Defiance Campaign organisers. They were married in 1958.

In 1962 Winnie Mandela was banned under the Suppression of Communism Act for her part in the struggle and was restricted to the Orlando Township in Soweto. Always a fiery woman she repeatedly flaunted this order and was charged on a number of occasions. In 1969 she was detained under the Terrorism Act and was placed in solitary confinement for 17 months. In 1970 she was placed under house arrest.

During the 1976 uprisings, she helped to establish the Black Women's Federation and the Black Parents' Association which were both allied to the Black Consciousness Movement. In 1977 she was detained under the Internal Security Act and banished to the small dusty town of Brandfort in the Orange Free State. There she helped set up a crèche and a clinic with Dr. Abu Baker Asvat.

Winnie Mandela returned to her home in Soweto in 1986 and resumed her ANC activities. She stood next to her husband, Nelson Mandela, when he was released from prison on 11 February 1990. However, the couple divorced in March 1996.

Since 1994 she has served the ANC and government in various positions.



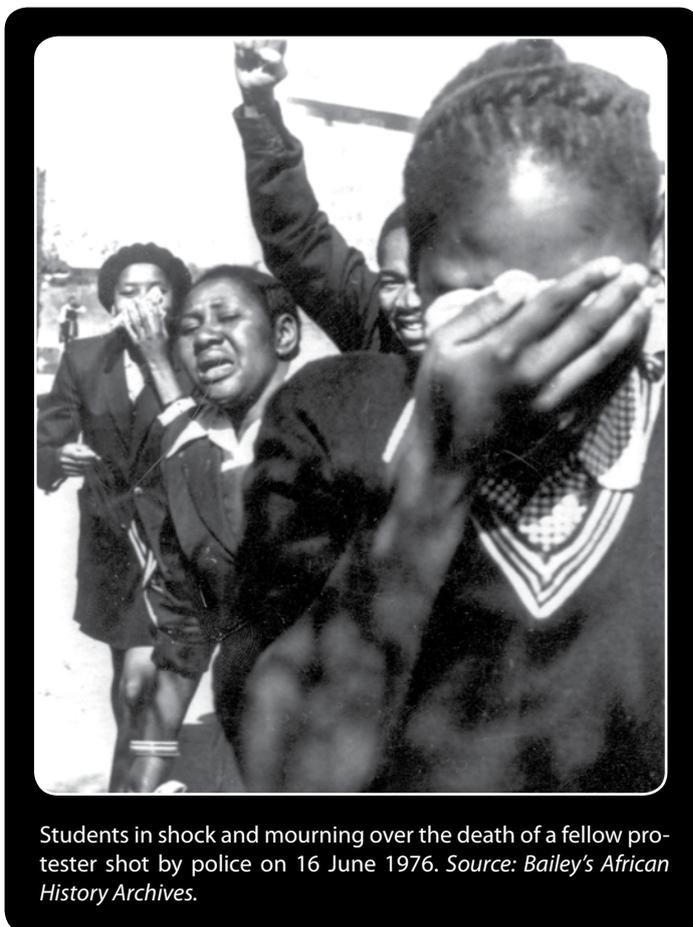
The voices of the crowd rose in song outside the Palace of Justice as Winnie Mandela appeared on the steps and left the courtroom. Nelson Mandela's mother is behind her, having come all the way from Umtata to hear that her son had been found guilty of sabotage and sentenced to life imprisonment. The Rivonia Trial, 1964. Source: Pretoria News.

## WOMEN'S ROLE IN THE 1976 SOWETO REVOLT AND MOUNTING PRESSURE ON THE APARTHEID STATE

The 1976 Soweto riots ushered in an era of increased confrontation between the State and political organisations fighting for liberation. A new generation of young people was committed to the struggle against Apartheid. They boycotted school, and adopted the slogan 'Liberation before education'. The youth became actively involved in politicising black communities.

After 1976 the Apartheid government's repression of the struggle increased in intensity. As a result, over 14,000 students left the country and went into exile, including many girls and women. They joined MK and APLA for military training in other countries. For example, Lindiwe Sisulu joined MK and underwent military training. She later specialised in Intelligence for MK.

This huge increase in the number of military trainees, and the increased resistance within South Africa, breathed new life into the liberation struggle for democracy.



Students in shock and mourning over the death of a fellow protester shot by police on 16 June 1976. Source: Bailey's African History Archives.

### BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE 1976 REVOLT

Soweto stands for South-West Townships, and lies to the south west of Johannesburg. It was a township set up by the government for black Africans to live in. Today, the events in Soweto and around the country in 1976 are remembered in a public holiday called Youth Day every year on June 16 in South Africa.

Although he did not directly take part in the Soweto riots, Steve Biko's BC ideas motivated students. On the morning of 16 June 1976 twenty thousand school children in Soweto went on a protest march. They were protesting against having to use Afrikaans as one of the languages of instruction at school.

The issue of Afrikaans was just the spark that started the Uprising - the real issue was the oppressive Apartheid laws.

The march started off peacefully, but later the police opened fire on the protesting students.

Chaos then broke loose throughout the whole of Soweto. Within the following week, at least 176 had died. Within the next few months, the protests and clashes with the police had spread to 160 black townships all over South Africa. 1976 was a turning point in South African history.



Soweto Uprising of 1976. Marching children, protesting against the use of Afrikaans as the medium of instruction at their schools. They marched from the south western end of Soweto collecting others on their route to Orlando East. Here, the police set dogs on them and opened fire. Source: Mike Mzileni, Bailey's African History Archive.



## CAESARINA KONA MAKHOERE

1955 -

**M**akhoere was born near Pretoria. When she was a very young, her family was forced to move in terms of the Group Areas Act and relocated to Mamelodi. After completing her education, she became active in politics.

She became involved in the students' resistance to Bantu Education, the campaign that was behind the Soweto uprising of 1976. In the immediate aftermath of the Soweto Revolt she was arrested under Section 6 of the Security Act of 1967, for attempting to undergo military training. It was

her own father who revealed her hiding place to the police.

Makhoere was convicted and imprisoned. During this time she was often moved between prisons. While at a prison in Silverton, Makhoere met Dorothy Nyembe, who taught her the history of women's resistance in South Africa. After her release in 1982 she began working for the Black Sash, another women's organisation which resisted Apartheid. Makhoere counselled victims of discriminatory laws and trauma experienced during detention, she also wrote a book about her experiences in prison, entitled *No Child's Play: In Prison Under Apartheid* (1988).

## THE REACTION TO THE GOVERNMENT'S INDIAN COUNCIL

**T**he Soweto riots of 1976 had prompted Vorster to make some limited concessions to the political position of 'coloureds' and Indians. In 1978, new laws created a body of 40 elected and five nominated members of the Indian community to be called the South African Indian Council (SAIC). This new council had limited support.

Progressive Indians, among them women such as Amina Cachalia, Fatima Meer and Ela Gandhi (who had been elected as Vice-President of the revived Natal Indian Congress) were opposed to this new form of Apartheid and anti-SAIC committees were formed to resist the measure.



From left: Dr. Jassat, Mrs. Luthuli, and Albertina Sisulu at an anti-SAIC conference in 1981 Durban. Source: Omar Badsha.



## RUTH FIRST

1925 - 1982

**R**uth First worked for the Johannesburg City Council, but soon left because she could not agree with the actions of the council. First then became an editor of the left-wing newspaper, 'The Guardian'. As a journalist her articles documented social conditions and events including the 1956 women's anti-pass campaign, migrant labour, bus boycotts and slum conditions. She wrote some of the finest pieces of social and labour journalism during the 1950s.

In 1949 she married lawyer, Joe Slovo. Like First, he was a member of the Communist Party. In 1953 First helped found the Congress of Democrats, the white wing of the Congress Alliance, and she took over as editor of 'Fighting Talk', a journal supporting the Congress Alliance. She was on the drafting committee of the Freedom Charter, but was unable to attend the Congress of the People at Kliptown in 1955 because of her banning order. In 1956 First and Slovo, were arrested and charged with treason in the infamous Treason Trial that lasted four years. The 156 accused were eventually acquitted.

In 1963 First was detained following the Liliesleaf arrests of the MK high command. She was detained in solitary confinement under the 90-day law. She attempted suicide during this time. She was later released and was not among the

Rivonia Trial accused, which included political leaders such as Nelson Mandela and Walter Sisulu, who were sentenced to life imprisonment.

After her release First left the country with her 3 children to join her husband, who was already in exile in the UK. The family settled in North London where First threw herself into anti-Apartheid politics in the 1960s and 1970s. She held talks, seminars and public discussions in support of the ANC and SACP. In 1977, she took the post of Professor and Research Director of the Centre for African Studies at the Eduardo Mondlane University in Maputo, Mozambique. It was in Mozambique that First was assassinated by a letter bomb which originated from military sources within South Africa.



Treason Trial, outside the court from left: J. Arenstein, Ruth First and Joe Slovo. 9 January 1957. Source: Museum Africa.

From what we have learned in this section, it is clear that during the 1970s the Apartheid state experienced increased resistance to its brutal laws. Women played a large role in this resistance.



## CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

Activity: Interpreting a photograph and writing a caption. Read the sources below and answer the questions which follow.

### Source A

*"In the confusion, Antoinette Pieterse searched for her younger brother Hector. She had seen him in the crowds earlier that morning ... now Hector, twelve and a grade six pupil, had melted away. Where could he be?...Then she saw a group of boys surrounding a youngster who lay injured on the side of a street...It was Hector! He was bleeding. He had been shot. She called him but he neither responded nor opened his eyes. She screamed hysterically. Mbuyisa Makhubo ... carried him in his arms while she walked alongside. The horror of the whole tragedy is mirrored on their faces as they walked down the street." - Source: Black South Africa: A People on the Boil by Harry Mashabela*

### Source B

*"I saw a child fall down. Under a shower of bullets I rushed forward and went for the picture. It had been a peaceful march, the children were told to disperse, and they started singing Nkosi Sikelele. The police were ordered to shoot." - Sam Nzima, photographer*

### Source C

The photograph in the flyer in Source D was published all over the world. It has become an iconic image. An icon is an image that symbolizes something much bigger than the image itself. In this case, the picture of Hector Peterson symbolizes the whole liberation movement.

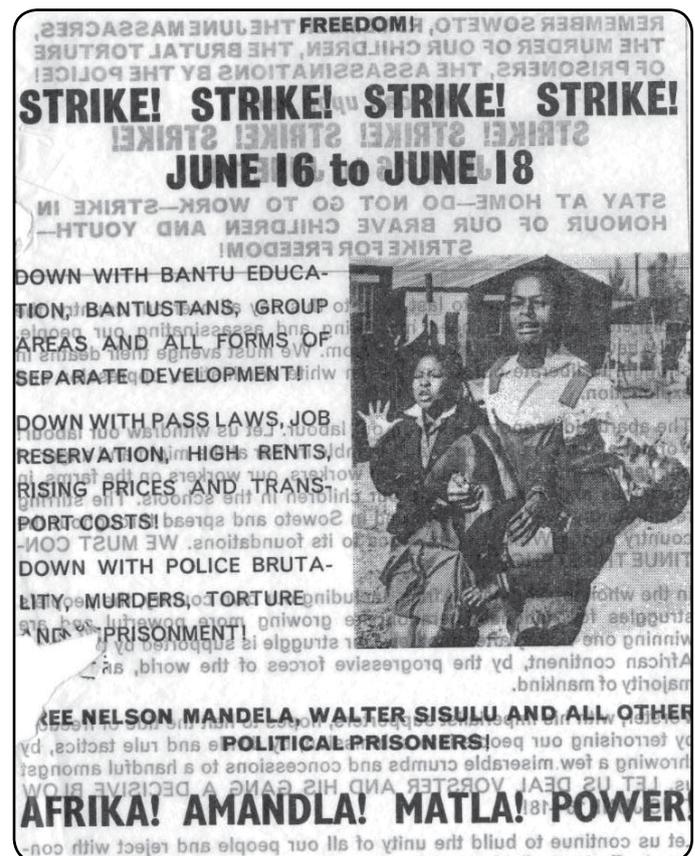
Use Source A and B to answer the questions about the photograph in Source C.

### Questions:

1. Look at the photograph. On which day, month and year was the photograph taken?
2. Name the two boys in the photograph.

3. Name the girl in the photograph. What was her relationship with the dying boy?
4. Use three words to describe what you think she was feeling.
5. The words that are written to describe a picture are called a caption. Write your own caption for this photograph. The caption should focus on Antoinette Pieterse.
6. In what way do you think that the photograph in Source D symbolizes the whole liberation movement against Apartheid?

### Source D



Source: South African National Archives.

## 1980s: WOMEN ORGANISE

In the 1980s, the context of resistance changed. International opposition to apartheid had grown and international boycotts of Apartheid South Africa were under way.

Opposition took many forms - many countries had economic sanctions against South Africa, the foreign investment in the country began to decline and sporting boycotts restricted the country's participation in international events. Internal resistance organizations had also grown and become more militant, and there were more alliances across race and class barriers. Rioting, protests and confrontations with police and the army were occurring on an almost daily basis.

From the end of the 1970s, women were integrated into many aspects of the liberation struggle. They occupied positions of leadership in political organisations and trade unions and played prominent roles. Many women went into exile and carried on their activism in other parts of Africa and abroad. In the 1980s women's organisations aligned these organisations to the newly formed United Democratic Front (UDF), which was widely described as the 'ANC in disguise'.

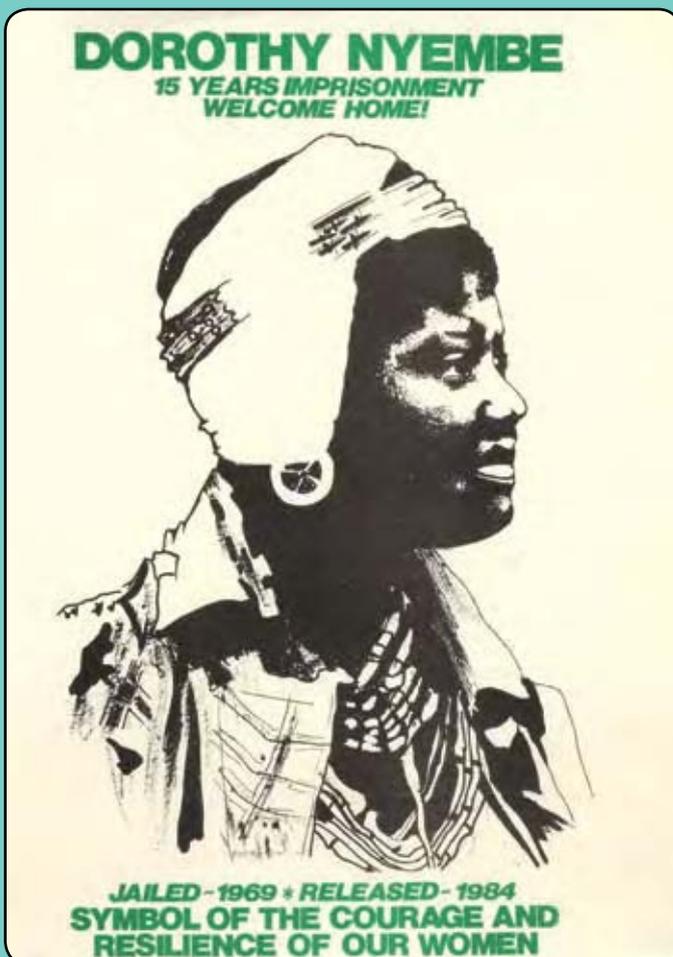
It was clear that the South African government was now facing more organised resistance than ever before. In 1984, PW

Botha made a desperate effort to make reforms by introducing a new constitution and created the Tricameral Parliament. Three parliaments were set up - one each for those classified as 'white', 'coloured' and Indian. However, this was widely rejected by 'coloured' and Indian people and seemed doomed to fail from the start.

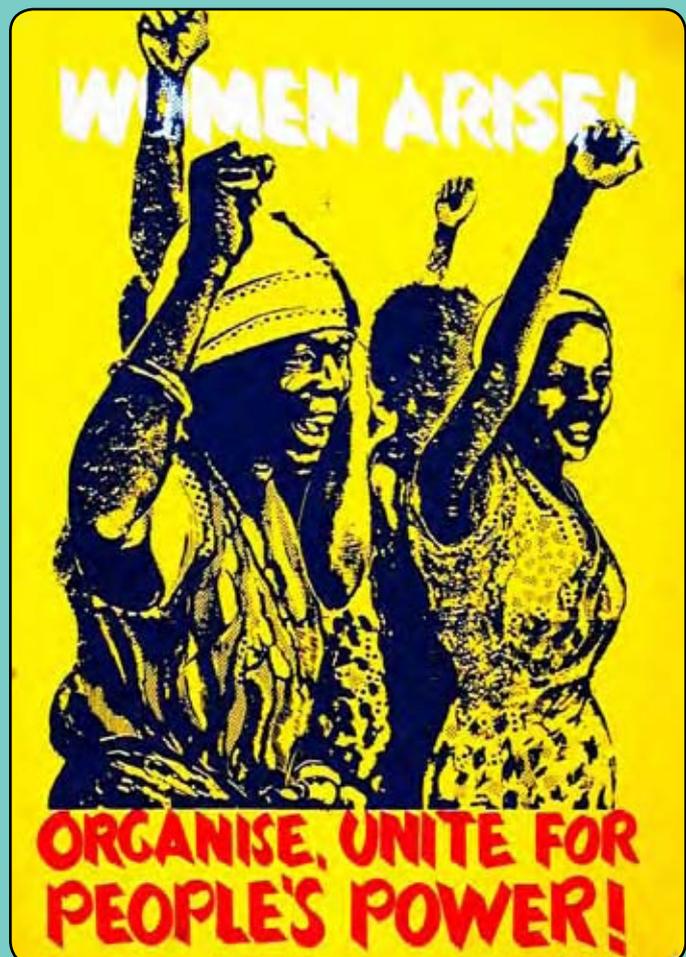
Press freedom was more strictly restricted. Resistance continued, with ethnic conflict and struggles between hostel and town dwellers adding to the turmoil. In an attempt to deal with the escalating protests, the government implemented successive States of Emergency during which many people were detained and organisations restricted. About 12% of the 3050 people detained in 1986/87 were women and girls.

Some of these women were tortured. Pregnant women were often assaulted, which led to miscarriage. Body searches, vaginal examinations and other humiliating procedures also occurred, and were all reported by former detainees at the Truth & Reconciliation Commission (TRC) hearings in 1996.

When P.W. Botha suffered a stroke in 1989 and F.W. de Klerk took over, it had become clear that a process of reform was necessary. He released a group of prominent political prisoners, including Walter Sisulu, and began to consult with them.



Dorothy Nyembe Poster, Litho, 1984.  
Designed by Thami Mnyele for ANC Lusaka.



Women Arise, Silkscreen, 1984. Designed by Thami Mnyele for Medu Art Ensemble.

## UNITED WOMEN'S CONGRESS, 1981

As a result of parents' reactions to the 1976 student revolts and their aftermath, ex-FEDSAW (Federation of South African Women) members in the Western Cape began organising themselves. In 1981 they formed the United Women's Congress (UWCO) in 1981. The organisation took up campaigns such as childcare, bread prices and bus fare increases. Many UWCO branches led housing campaigns, launched rent boycotts and defended children against police brutality.

As part of the aim to unite all women in the fight against Apartheid, UWCO assisted in setting up civic organisations and UWCO spearheaded the formation of the United Democratic Front (UDF). In 1986, UWCO began a process of re-establishing the Federation of South African Women (FEDSAW) by uniting with other women's organisations such as the Natal Organisation of Women (NOW) and the Federation of Transvaal Women (FEDTRAW).



Students protest against the apartheid government killing of exiles in front line states Lamontville, Durban in 1986. *Photograph by Omar Badsha.*

## UNITED DEMOCRATIC FRONT, 1983

The United Democratic Front (UDF) was launched in Mitchell's Plain near Cape Town on 20 August 1983. About 600 delegates from more than 475 organisations and a crowd of about 13 000 people converged on the area. The delegates represented students, youth, workers, civics, women, religious groups, sports bodies and trade unions. The gathering was the biggest crowd of anti-Apartheid resisters since the mass meetings of the Con-

gress Alliance in the 1950s.

The initial aim of the UDF was to oppose the National Party's Tricameral parliamentary proposals. They used the slogan 'UDF Unites, Apartheid Divides'. The UDF soon became the leading anti-Apartheid political movement within the country, with more than 1, 5 million supporters. It mobilised nationwide resistance, led a series of boycotts, and became involved in labour issues.

Many of the members of the UDF were banned but continued their activities underground.



Cheryl Carolus speaking at the University of the Witwatersrand on Women's Day, 1984. 1984 was the ANC's Year of the Woman. *Photograph by Gille de Vlieg, supplied by African Media Online.*



### UDF WOMEN'S CONGRESS

The Congress was formed on 23 April 1987 by all women's organisations that were affiliated to the UDF and included women's co-operatives, women's sections of youth and civic organisations, unions and church groups. The Congress was formed as a body that would uphold the Freedom Charter and the Women's Charter of the 1950s. It was aimed at teaching men and women in the UDF about women's oppression, methods of how to do away with all forms of discrimination based on gender and to talk about women's problems in all UDF organisations. It also aimed to increase women's skills.

While the UDF was non-aligned, most of its leadership and affiliates were either members of the underground ANC or sympathetic to it. The UDF also adopted the ANC's Freedom Charter as it represented the aims of a free South Africa and provided a basis for a democratic constitution. With the unbanning of the ANC in 1990, many of the prominent UDF members joined the ANC. Soon afterwards, on 20 August 1991, the UDF was disbanded.



## SHEILA WEINBERG

1945-2004

Sheila Weinberg was born in Johannesburg to politically active parents, Eli and Violate Weinberg, who were members of the ANC and South African Communist Party (SACP). Sheila Weinberg was involved in her parents' activism from an early age. She attended the Congress of the People in Kliptown in 1955 when she was only ten years old! She also painted slogans and assisted in the underground activities of the ANC and SACP. During the periods in which her parents were in detention or in exile she was looked after by Helen Joseph.

Weinberg was detained for the first time in 1964 and at 19 years was the youngest detainee at the time. She was held for 65 days at Johannesburg Fort Prison but was released without being charged. In 1976, Weinberg was served with her first banning order which restricted her to Johannesburg. During this time she was the secretary of the Human Rights Committee and wrote a bulletin detailing Apartheid repression which was subsequently banned.

In 1983, as a leading member of the Johannesburg Democratic Action Committee (JODAC) she worked to popularise the United Democratic Front in her constituency. During the 1980s, Weinberg was also central to the activities of the Transvaal branch of the Black Sash and the Five Freedoms Front, which worked to activate white resistance to Apartheid. She was a founder and Board member of the Administration Training Project which provided training and support to civic organisations, trade unions and the UDF in the 1980s. When the UDF was restricted she helped found the Friends of the UDF which helped raise funds for the UDF.

After the ANC was unbanned in 1991, Weinberg worked for the Congress' North East Johannesburg branch, which was later renamed after her father. From 1994 until the General Election in 2004 she served as a member of the Gauteng Legislature. During this period she was active in protests and vigils held against the violence in the Middle East. She also took particular interest in assisting emerging farmers in her constituency of Westonaria and fought for the rights of the disabled. On 11 November 2004, Weinberg suffered a brain aneurysm and died shortly afterwards.



## VICTORIA MXENGE

1942-1985

Mxenge was born in King Williams Town in the Eastern Cape. She matriculated from Healdtown High School in Fort Beaufort. While she was completing a nursing diploma, she began attending political meetings at Fort Hare University. After marrying Griffiths Mlungisi Mxenge, who was studying at Natal University, in November 1964 Mxenge moved to Durban where she trained as a midwife, and later also obtained a Public Health Certificate. In 1974, she registered for a B.Proc Degree with Unisa. Mxenge graduated in 1981 and was articled to her husband's legal firm and later that year she was admitted as an attorney.

After her marriage, Mxenge's political activities were mainly in support of her husband's political and trade union activities. He was repeatedly banned, imprisoned and placed in detention. In 1981, Mxenge's husband was killed by an Apartheid hit squad. Victoria Mxenge was left to continue her husband's busy legal practice. After the death of her husband she began to play a more prominent role in the liberation struggle.

She took on many sensitive political trials on behalf of those accused by the Apartheid government. Mxenge was murdered in her home in Umhlangeni while preparing for the trial in 1985. Her funeral was attended by approximately 10 000 people. The government said she had died from head injuries and had been murdered by persons unknown. In 1997, as part of the Truth and Reconciliation Hearings, the ANC named Marvin Sefako as her killer. Sefako admitted to the murder of more than 20 people which had been ordered by the Durban branch of the Security Police. For Mxenge's murder, Sefako stated he had been paid R5000.



Helen Joseph (back) and mourners at the memorial service in Durban for Victoria Mxenge, who was assassinated by government agents in 1985. Photograph by Omar Badsha.

## NATAL ORGANISATION OF WOMEN, 1983

From 1980 women in Durban had been gathering on an annual basis to commemorate the Women's March of 9 August 1956. The organisers of the event decided to form an organisation that would provide an ongoing programme to unite women and deal with women's issues. As a result, the Natal Organisation of Women (NOW) was formed in December 1983 as one of the affiliates of the UDF. The first president was Pumzile Mlambo (later to become South Africa's first female Deputy President) while Hersheela Narsee was secretary. The following year Nozizwe Madlala took over as president and Victoria Mxenge was elected as secretary. However, a year later, while preparing for the Pietermaritzburg treason trial, Mxenge was murdered in her home.

The main aim of NOW was to fight for the upliftment of women. NOW drafted a constitution that would safeguard women's rights. Women were trained and encouraged to take up leadership positions in various fields.

NOW also campaigned for better housing at affordable rates, and was concerned with pass laws, the lack of proper maternity benefits and child-care. The establishment of NOW was a major factor in the increased role of women in political and civic organisations and in the establishment of the rights of women in the struggle and all spheres of society.

With the declaration of the 1986 State of Emergency and the mass detentions and restrictions on the UDF that followed, NOW activists, such as Florence Mkhize, found they were filling the leadership vacuum in Natal and spearheaded a number of UDF campaigns that the UDF itself could not carry out. It helped victims by providing shelter, food and moral support. From 1985 until it disbanded, NOW was focused on the violence that had erupted between the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) and the UDF. The organisation was disbanded in 1990 and many of its members joined the ANC and the ANC Women's League.



The launch of the Natal Organisation of Women (NOW) in 1984, Albertina Sisulu (centre) and executive members at the launch of the Natal Organisation of Women (NOW). Photograph by Omar Badsha.



## FLORENCE MKHIZE

1932-1999

**F**lorence Mkhize, widely known as 'Ma Flo', was born in Umzumbe on the South Coast of Natal. She became politically active from a young age. She joined the Congress Movement and became one of the most active women leaders in the anti-Apartheid struggle.

In 1952 she participated in the Defiance Campaign which led to her first banning order. Despite this she continued to communicate with her comrades through the sewing factory where she worked. Mkhize was also a founding member of the Federation of South African Women (FEDSAW), working underground due to her banning order. In 1955, Mkhize was elected as a volunteer to participate in the writing of the Freedom Charter. On her way to Kliptown her bus was stopped by the police and sent back. Mkhize also became involved in organising FEDSAW's Women's

Day March in 1956. On her way to the rally her bus was once again sent back by the police. After the banning of the ANC, she continued in the struggle as a member of the South African Communist Party (SACP) and as an organiser of the South African Congress of Trade Unions (SACTU) until these structures were also banned.

During the 1970s, Mkhize led the 'Release Mandela' Campaign in Natal. In the 1980s she led the people of Lamontville township in Durban during the education and housing crisis. Mkhize was also a founding member of the UDF and worked with the Natal Organisation of Women (NOW) in an attempt to get support from women from all racial groups.

In 1998, Mkhize received the Bravery Award from the ANC Women's League in appreciation for her work in the struggle. She also received a Military Gold Medal from Nelson Mandela at the Umkhonto we Sizwe (MK) Veterans Conference in 1999. On 10 July 1999, Mkhize died of heart failure.

## THE FEDERATION OF TRANSVAAL WOMEN, 1984

**F**EDTRAW was formed on 8 December 1984 in celebration of the formation of its mother body, the Federation of South African Women (FEDSAW). The women worked together on issues such as high food prices, high rents, the conscription of white young men into the army and inadequate child-care facilities. FEDTRAW also focused on the plight of rural women.

FEDTRAW decided to adopt the Women's Charter as a working document as the demands of women at the time were the same as when the Charter was drafted in 1955. Sister Bernard Ncube was elected as first President of the federation, while Albertina Sisulu, Rita Ndzanga, Francis Baard and Maniben Sita were elected as active patrons. Helen Joseph and Winnie Mandela were non-active patrons.



## SISTER BERNARD NCUBE

1932-

**S**ister Bernard Ncube was born in Johannesburg. She attended Roma College in Lesotho where she received a Diploma in Theology. In 1955 she entered the Companions Catholic Order and began teaching in Catholic schools in Johannesburg.

During the 1970s and 1980s, Sister Ncube helped form various local women's organisations in the Transvaal Region. In 1984 she was elected the President of FEDTRAW. Due to political activity she was detained six times under State of Emergency regulations. On one occasion she spent three months in solitary confinement. Due to international pressure she was released along with two other detainees. In 1986, Sister Ncube was part of a UDF delegation that met with President George Bush Snr. In August 1987, along with 12 other members of the Krugersdorp Residents Association, Sister Ncube was charged with plotting to overthrow the government. However, the charges were later dropped due to a lack of evidence.

In 1991 Sister Ncube became a member of the ANC's National Executive Committee, a position she held until 1997, and in 1994 she became a Member of Parliament, chairing the Committee on Arts and Culture, Science and Technology. In 2002 she became Mayor of the Westrand Metropolitan Council, Randfontein,. She is also the Co-ordinator of the Ministries Department of the Institute for Contextual Theology.



Sister Bernard Ncube with FEDTRAW members at the Welcome Home Rally for the released Robben Island leaders in Soweto. Source: Gille de Vlieg, African Media Online.



## HELEN JOSEPH

1905-1992

**H**elen Joseph was born in Midhurst, Sussex in England. She graduated from Kings College London in 1927 and went to teach in Hyderabad, India. In 1931 Joseph came to South Africa. During World War II she returned to England to serve as information and welfare officer in the Women's Auxiliary Air Force and decided to become a social worker.

After returning to South Africa, Joseph took a job with the Garment Workers Union (GWU) in 1951. Joseph was also a founding member of the South African Congress of Democrats (CoD), an organisation of whites which was affiliated to the ANC. She was also a founder of the Federation of South African Women (FEDSAW) in 1954 and was its national secretary for a time. With the leadership of FEDSAW, she spearheaded a march of 20 000 women to the Union Buildings in Pretoria on 9 August 1956 to protest against pass laws. Joseph was subsequently arrested and charged with high treason in December 1956 and banned in 1957. She was the first women to be placed under house arrest in 1962 and survived several assassination attempts. She was diagnosed with cancer in 1971 and her banning orders were lifted but reinstated for two years in 1980.

During the 1980s, Joseph was instrumental in reviving the women's movement within the country and was often called on to be a keynote speaker at anti-Apartheid rallies. Joseph gave speeches on the history of resistance organised at various campuses by the National Union of South African Students (NUSAS) and was given the position of Honorary Vice President of NUSAS. In 1983, when the UDF

was launched she was elected Honorary Patron, as her listing meant she could not hold an executive position, and participated in many UDF events. In 1984 she gave the opening speech at the formative conference of FEDTRAW and was named a non-active patron. Joseph died on 25 December 1992 and her funeral was conducted by Archbishop Desmond Tutu with the eulogy was delivered by Nelson Mandela.



Helen Joseph, secretary of the Federation of SA Women, arrives at the Treason Trial, Drill Hall Court, 9 January 1957. Source: Museum Africa.

## TRADE UNIONS: COSATU, 1985

**T**here was an unprecedented level of resistance in factories and black communities in the 1980s over economic and political issues. In fact, it was a period in which the highest level of strikes in South African history was recorded. In 1982, an average of a thousand black workers a day went on strike and this trend continued to increase. Industrial action was undertaken against the background of low wages and discriminatory labour practices.

After four years of unity talks between unions who were opposed to Apartheid and struggled for a non-racial, non-sexist and democratic South Africa, COSATU was formed on 2 December, 1985. Emma Mashinini, an active trade unionist from the 1940s, was a driving force in bringing together various unions under COSATU. At the time of its establishment COSATU had more than 462 000 members organised in 33 unions, and by 1991 this number had grown to more than 1 258 800. The activities of COSATU became closely linked to the wider liberation struggle.



A delegation of women from the Food and Allied Workers Union participate in the Congress of South African Trade Unions cultural day in Johannesburg in July 1987. Source: Jeeva Rajgopaul.



## EMMA MASHININI

1929 -

**E**mma Mashinini was born in Johannesburg on 29 August 1929. In the 1930s, she and her family were forcibly removed to Orlando in Soweto. She started working in a clothing factory where she worked her way up and was later elected to the National Executive Committee of the National Union of Clothing Workers (NUCW), the highest body of the Garment Worker's Union. She remained a member of the committee for the next 12 years.

In 1975 Mashinini founded the Commercial, Catering and Allied Worker's Union of South Africa (CCAWUSA) and became its President. By 1977, her union had 1 000 members.

Mashinini was arrested in November 1981 under Section 6 of the Terrorism Act and spent the next six months in solitary confinement at Pretoria Central Prison. After her release, despite advice to go into exile, she resumed her post at CCAWUSA for another four years.

In 1985, she was involved in the formation of the Congress of South African Trade unions (COSATU), a body that united trade unions across the country. After resigning from CCAWUSA she was appointed Director of the Anglican Church's Department of Justice and Reconciliation. In the early 1990s she became the President of the Mediation and Conciliation Centre in Johannesburg and in 1995 was appointed Commissioner for the Restitution of Land Rights.



Emma Mashinini at a trade union meeting at Khotso House in Johannesburg in 1983. *Photograph by Cedric Nunn.*

## BLACK SASH IN THE 1980S

**I**n 1955 The Women's Defence of the Constitution League was formed by a small group of white, middle-class, predominantly English speaking women to protest the Separate Representation of Voters Bill which aimed to remove 'coloureds' from the general voters roll. When the Bill was passed the organisation continued to protest against legislation that infringed the rule of law. The organisation grew into an avenue for liberal white women to oppose the government. The organisation was nicknamed the 'Black Sash' which referred to the black sashes that members draped over their right shoulder during protest marches.

From the mid-1970s, under the presidency of Sheena Dun-

can, the Black Sash began to focus on the destructive pass laws. The Black Sash became concerned with the monitoring of pass law courts to expose injustices and set up Advice Offices to assist in various parts of the country. Problems handled by these offices included employer/employee issues, unemployment insurance and pensions. The Sash, as it was sometimes known, worked with a number of organisations in the 1980s including the UDF, FEDSAW and the End Conscription Campaign.

After the 1994 elections, the Black Sash shifted focus from being a protest organisation to become a professional one, still upholding the same principles of making submissions to government in shaping legislation and advising on welfare.



## MOLLY BLACKBURN

1930-1985

**M**olly Blackburn was born in Port Elizabeth (P.E.) into a political family – her father, Elgar Bellhouse Pagden, was active in the Progressive Party in P.E. Blackburn graduated from Rhodes University, Grahamstown, with a BA Degree. After graduating she taught in London and lived in Belgium before returning to South Africa.

On her return to P.E., Blackburn joined the Black Sash as she felt she could no longer take a back seat to the violence, poverty and political injustice that faced black South Africans. However, she soon left Black Sash due to its inactivity at the time. In 1981, Blackburn won the provincial seat for the Progressive Federal Party (PFP) to represent P.E. in the Cape Provincial Council. However, Blackburn was often

critical of the party as it mainly focused on issues faced by whites.

In 1982, Black Sash opened an advice in P.E. and Blackburn rejoined the organisation. She was approached by Matthew Goniwe to officially inquire about the rent restructuring in the Lingelgile township near Cradock. Together with Goniwe and three others – Sicelo Mhlawuli, Sparrow Mkhonto and Fort Calata – who later became known as the Cradock Four - Blackburn assisted in setting up the Cradock Residents Association. When the Cradock Four were abducted in June 1985, Blackburn became involved in finding the missing men. When their bodies were later found she led an inquiry into their deaths at the hands of the Security Police.

Together with long time friend, Di Bishop, Blackburn was instrumental in getting the National Party to start an enquiry into the Langa shootings that took place on



## CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

### A definition of Apartheid

During the 1980s hundreds of thousands of black South Africans were forced to move and were dumped in remote rural areas called Bantustans or 'homelands'. These forced removals mainly affected women.

#### Source A

*Black people were forced to move to the Bantustans, and dumped in the middle of nowhere with inadequate facilities. Millions of people were moved by the police and the army to live in a new place, often places they had never seen before. "This thing came so sudden upon us ... when they came to us, they came with guns and police ... we had no choice... the guns were behind us... they did not say anything they just threw our belongings in. There is nothing to say or the gun is through your head. We did not know, we still do not know this place... and when we came here they just dumped our things, so that we are still here. What can we do now? We can do nothing."*

A woman describing being moved to a resettlement camp

#### Source B

*"The policy of separate development is designed for happiness, security and stability".*

A South African supporter of Apartheid

### The role of the Black Sash

White women, like those in the Black Sash, also participated in the struggle against Apartheid.

#### Source A

*"Black Sash members themselves were arrested, taken into detention, kept under surveillance and harassed ... The establishment of the United Democratic Front in 1983 brought together a number of organisations in a concerted push to exert pressure for change. In 1985 and then 1986 the beleaguered state introduced a State of Emergency. Once again many voices were silenced. Black Sash members, the majority of whom had a measure of protection as white, middle-class women, felt the responsibility of still having a degree of political freedom to speak out. They added to the wedge of pressure forcing the pace of change ..."*

From: [www.blacksash.org.za](http://www.blacksash.org.za)

#### Questions:

Read Source A and B and answer this question:

If you were a woman who was forced to move during the 1980s, how would you have described Apartheid in one sentence? Begin your sentence with: "The policy of Apartheid is ...."

Read Source A, and answer these questions:

a) Why do you think white women joined the struggle against Apartheid?

b) Why do you think white women had a 'measure of protection' from the Apartheid state?

21 March 1985. Her involvement in such issues led her to be seen as a troublemaker by members of the National Party. Blackburn received numerous death threats and was arrested on several occasions.

On 28 December 1985, while traveling back from Oudtshoorn with Judy Chalmers, her sister and Di and Brian Bishop, they were involved in a collision. In the collision both Blackburn and Brian Bishop were killed. Her funeral, on 2 January 1986, was attended by 20 000 people.



Family of detained youth ask Black Sash members Di Bishop, Audrey Coleman and others for help. In 1985, when Molly Blackburn and other Black Sash members entered the Uitenhage Police Station, they discovered young people tied to table legs while being beaten by policemen. Source: Gille de Vlieg, African Media Online.

## 1990S: WOMEN BEFORE AND AFTER THE FIRST DEMOCRATIC ELECTION

### THE PRE-ELECTION PERIOD

In 1990 the first glimmers of a new more democratic South Africa were evident. The African National Congress (ANC) and other organizations were unbanned and political prisoners, including Nelson Mandela, were released. Talks about power-sharing were held between the Apartheid government and leaders of the ANC

However, violence escalated in the 1990 to 1994 period. More than 700 people died violently in the first eight months of 1990. The economy was in shreds and there was still no real constitutional reform that would give black people any meaningful say in government. President FW de Klerk realized that reform had to take place. In the March 1992 referendum for the white electorate, De Klerk was given the mandate to bring about change.

Negotiations had been initiated in May 1990 at Groote Schuur, Cape Town and were followed by the Convention for a Democratic South Africa (CODESA) I and II. At this stage, women activists began to return to South Africa to take up senior political posts and make an active contribution in the progress towards democracy.

In 1990, for example, Geraldine Fraser-Moleketi returned from exile at the request of the South African Communist Party (SACP) to assist with re-launching of the SACP after it was unbanned. Some other women that returned to South Africa include Phyllis Naidoo, Ruth Mompati, Shanthivathie (Shanthie) Naidoo, singer Miriam Makeba and trade unionist Ray Alexander.



Members of the Food and Canning Workers Union awaiting the arrival of Ray Alexander from exile. Ray Alexander was the former General Secretary of the organisation and one of the founding members of the women's federation. Cape Town. 1990. Source: Omar Badsha.



Returned exiles and veterans of the South African Communist Party at the launch of the SACP, Gugulethu, Cape Town. 1992. Source: Omar Badsha.



Members of the ANC and its allies protest against state sponsored violence in Natal. Cape Town. 1993. Source: Omar Badsha.



## PHYLLIS NAIDOO

1928 -

In 1958 Phyllis Naidoo married MD Naidoo, a committed member of the South African Communist Party (SACP). She began working with her husband and Govan Mbeki to aid people underground by making deliveries and assisting those in danger to get out of the country. In 1961 Phyllis joined the SACP.

She was banned and under house arrest from 1966 until 1976. She qualified as a lawyer in 1973 but could not practice, as she was not allowed in court. When her banning order was lifted, she set up her practice.

In 1977 Phyllis escaped to Lesotho, and joined ANC. She helped children who had left South Africa, and assisted others to escape from South Africa.

While in Lesotho, Phyllis was Chief Legal Aid Counsel for the Lesotho Government. After warnings that the South African

government were trying to kill her, she fled to Zimbabwe.

In Zimbabwe she continued her political activities for the ANC's Umkhonto we Sizwe (MK). She returned to South Africa in 1990.

Phyllis Naidoo has written a number of books about her experience of the struggle.



Phyllis Naidoo, Durban, 2002. Source: Gisele Wulfsohn.

## ANC WOMEN'S LEAGUE

The ANC formed the Women's League in 1943. In 1954 a multi-racial organisation, the Federation of South African Women (FEDSAW), was established. The ANC Women's League (ANCWL) made up FEDSAW's largest component.

The ANCWL was banned from functioning by the Apartheid regime after 1960. Women still continued their resistance through new legal organisations or underground structures. The Women's Section of the ANC played an active role abroad. Heads of the ANC's Woman's Section included Florence Mophosho and Gertrude Shope.

After the unbanning of the ANC, the ANCWL was re-launched in Durban. The launch took place on 9 August 1990, the anniversary of the famous women's anti-pass march to the Union Buildings in Pretoria in 1956.

In April 1991 the first National Conference of the ANC Women's League (ANCWL), inside the country, took place in Kimberley. The first National Executive Committee was elected after the adoption of the constitution. Winnie Madikizela-Mandela and Albertina Sisulu were elected to the National Executive Committee of the ANC and Gertrude Shope became the president of the ANCWL. Gill Marcus was given the important task of training ANC media workers and voter educators prior to the 1994 elections. She also accompanied Nelson Mandela on his election campaign.

The second conference of the ANC Women's League took place in Durban in December 1993. Winnie Madikizela-Mandela was elected President, with Thandi Modise as Deputy President and Nosiviwe Mapisa-Ngcakula as Secretary General. In 1997 Winnie Madikizela-Mandela was re-elected as President and in 2003 Nosiviwe Mapisa-Ngcakula took over this position. In 2008 Angie Motshekga was elected ANCWL president, a position she still holds today.



## RUTH MOMPATI

1925 -

Ruth Mompoti was born outside Vryburg, Western Transvaal. She obtained her Primary School Teaching Diploma in 1944 and starting teaching at local schools. Mompoti joined the North West District Teachers' Union. In the late 1940s she began to have contact with the local branch of the ANC in Mafikeng. In 1952, Mompoti married Peter Matswane and moved to Orlando West. Her husband was a member of the ANC and Mompoti also became a member. Mompoti went to a private school to study shorthand and typing and got a job at Nelson Mandela and Oliver Tambo's law firm.

Mompoti became part of the ANC Women's' League and assisted in launching the Federation of South African Women

(FEDSAW) in 1954 and in organising its anti-pass protest on 9 August 1956. During the State of Emergency in 1960, she was instructed by Walter Sisulu to go underground. A week after the State of Emergency was lifted Mompoti was arrested but was released three days later. In 1962, Mompoti left South Africa and worked for the ANC in Tanzania and was elected a member of the ANC's NEC and formed part of the President's Office of the ANC.

Between 1981 and 1982, Mompoti served as the chief representative of the ANC in the United Kingdom. She became part of the delegation that opened talks with the South African government at Groote Schuur in 1990. In 1994, Mompoti was elected a Member of Parliament in the National Assembly. She became Ambassador to Switzerland from 1996, and when she returned in 2000, she became Mayor of Vryburg in the North-West Province.

## WOMEN'S NATIONAL COALITION

Soon after the unbanning of the ANC and its structures towards the end of 1990, the ANC Women's League approached all the women's organisations to set up a coalition. Seventy organisations joined and the Women's National Coalition (WNC) was formed in April 1991 and officially launched in April 1992.

The task of this coalition was to research, co-ordinate, and draw up a Women's Charter based on the priorities and concerns of women from all walks of life throughout the country. The Charter was completed in 1994 and accepted at a national convention held in February 1994. It was handed over to the State President, Nelson Mandela, in Parliament on 9 August 1994. 9 August was declared 'National Women's Day'. The issues of concern to women that were listed in this Women's Charter were then incorporated into the new constitution and the Bill of Rights.

The Women's National Coalition now focuses on training for parliamentary and local government candidates and community leaders, and plays a key role in adult basic education and gender training.



### DOROTHY NYEMBE

1931-1998

Dorothy Nyembe was born near Dundee in Natal where she attended a local mission school until Standard 9 (Grade 11). She joined the ANC in 1952, and participated as a volunteer in the Defiance Campaign in Durban. She was imprisoned briefly on two occasions. In 1954 she assisted in establishing the ANC Women's League in Cato Manor and became the Chairperson of the 'Two Sticks' Branch Committee. In 1956 Nyembe was elected Vice-President of the Durban ANC Women's League and led the Natal contingent of the anti-pass protest on 9 August 1956. Three years later she became the President of the ANC Women's League in Natal.

Nyembe was recruited into Umkhonto we Sizwe (MK) in 1961 and as President of the Natal Rural Areas Committee, a year later, she led what became known as the Natal Women's Revolt. In 1963, Nyembe was arrested and sentenced to three years for furthering the aims of the banned ANC. She was detained again in 1968, after working underground, with ten others and sentenced to 15 years for harbouring members of the MK. After her release in 1984, Nyembe became involved in the Natal Organisation of Women (NOW) a community organisation fighting against rent increases, transport costs, poor education and lack of child care facilities. In the late 1980s she received the USSR People's Friendship Award.

In 1992, Nyembe was awarded the Chief Albert Luthuli Prize for her commitment and dedication to the liberation struggle. After the 1994 elections she became a member of the National Assembly. Nyembe died at her home in Umlazi on 17 December 1998.



Dorothy Nyembe after her release. She spent 15 years in prison for ANC activities. Kwa Mashu, Durban, 1984. Source: Omar Badsha.



Desmond Tutu and Antjie Krog (with her team of journalists) at a TRC hearing. Antjie Krog is a journalist, writer and award-winning poet. She covered the TRC hearings and wrote about the experience in *Country of my Skull* (1998) for which she received the Alan Paton Award, the Hiroshima Peace Culture Foundation Award and the Olive Schreiner award. *Photograph by George Hallett, supplied by African Media Online.*

## POST 1994 PERIOD

### THE FIRST DEMOCRATIC GENERAL ELECTION IN SOUTH AFRICA

On 27 April 1994, South Africans formed long queues at polling stations throughout the country. A spirit of goodwill prevailed and all violence, contrary to expectations, came to a halt.

The result was a landslide victory for the ANC; it gained 62,65% of the vote and proved to be not only the most popular party, but also the only party to have countrywide support. The ANC held 252 of the 400 seats in the National Assembly. Nelson Mandela, as the leader of the ANC, became the new President of South Africa.

Before 1994, women constituted 2,7% of Members of Parliament. In the 1994 elections, Women won 111 out of 400 (27%) seats in the National Assembly, while in the Provincial Legislatures women comprised 24% out of a total of 425 members. This meant that the combined total of women in government in South Africa was 26,2% compared to the global average of 11% at the time.

Women became more prominent in the diplomatic service which bears out the terms of the Women's Charter that there should be no discrimination on the basis of gender.. This is a far cry from the days under the minority White government when Helen Suzman stood alone as a woman in Parliament.



## TOWARDS CHANGE

**A**fter the 1994 elections, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) was set up. The Commission investigated what happened during the Apartheid era from 1960 to 1994. They heard testimonies from all members of South African society about political crimes, violence and human rights abuses that had not been disclosed. In theory the commission was empowered to grant amnesty to those charged with atrocities during Apartheid as long as certain conditions were met. Statements were heard by more than 20 000 people, including women. 5 392 people were refused amnesty and 849 were granted amnesty, but no women applied for amnesty.

On 28 October 1998 the Commission presented its report to the State President, Nelson Mandela. The report condemned both sides for committing atrocities. The TRC was a crucial component of the transition to full and free democracy in South Africa.

In 1996, a new constitution, with provision for women's rights, was introduced along with a Commission for Gender Equality. This marked a turning point for women in South Africa and aided in empowering women in many ways in the late 1990s.



### CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

Read the following extracts about the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and then answer the questions below.

#### Extract 1

*"Retributive justice is largely western. The African understanding is far more restorative not so much to punish as to redress or restore a balance that has been knocked askew. The justice we hope for is restorative of the dignity of the people."*  
- Archbishop Desmond Tutu, during the TRC proceedings

#### Extract 2

*These words were said during the time of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission by Mrs Cynthia Ngewu whose son, Christopher Piet was killed by the Security Police in 1986. In response to the plea of forgiveness from the man who killed her son, she said:*

*"This thing called reconciliation ...if I am understanding it correctly ... if it means this perpetrator, this man who has killed*

*Christopher Piet, if it means he becomes human again, this man, so that I, so that all of us, get our humanity back ... then I agree, then I support it all."*

- Source: TRC Report 1998b: 451

#### Questions:

1. Explain the difference between restorative and retributive justice.
2. What did Mrs Cynthia Ngewu mean in Extract 2?
3. Do you agree with her sentiments? Explain your answer.
4. Discuss with your class your feelings about restorative justice and the work of the TRC.

## 2000s - WOMEN IN THE NEW SOUTH AFRICA

In 1996, a new South African Constitution, with provision for women's rights, was introduced along with a Commission for Gender Equality. This marked a turning point for women in South Africa, but although the first few years of democracy continued to empower women in many ways, there are still a number of crucial challenges to be met today.

### WOMEN IN GOVERNMENT

South African women, across racial lines, have been the source of courage for all of us in the struggle for democracy. The number of women in official posts at all three levels of government is increasing.

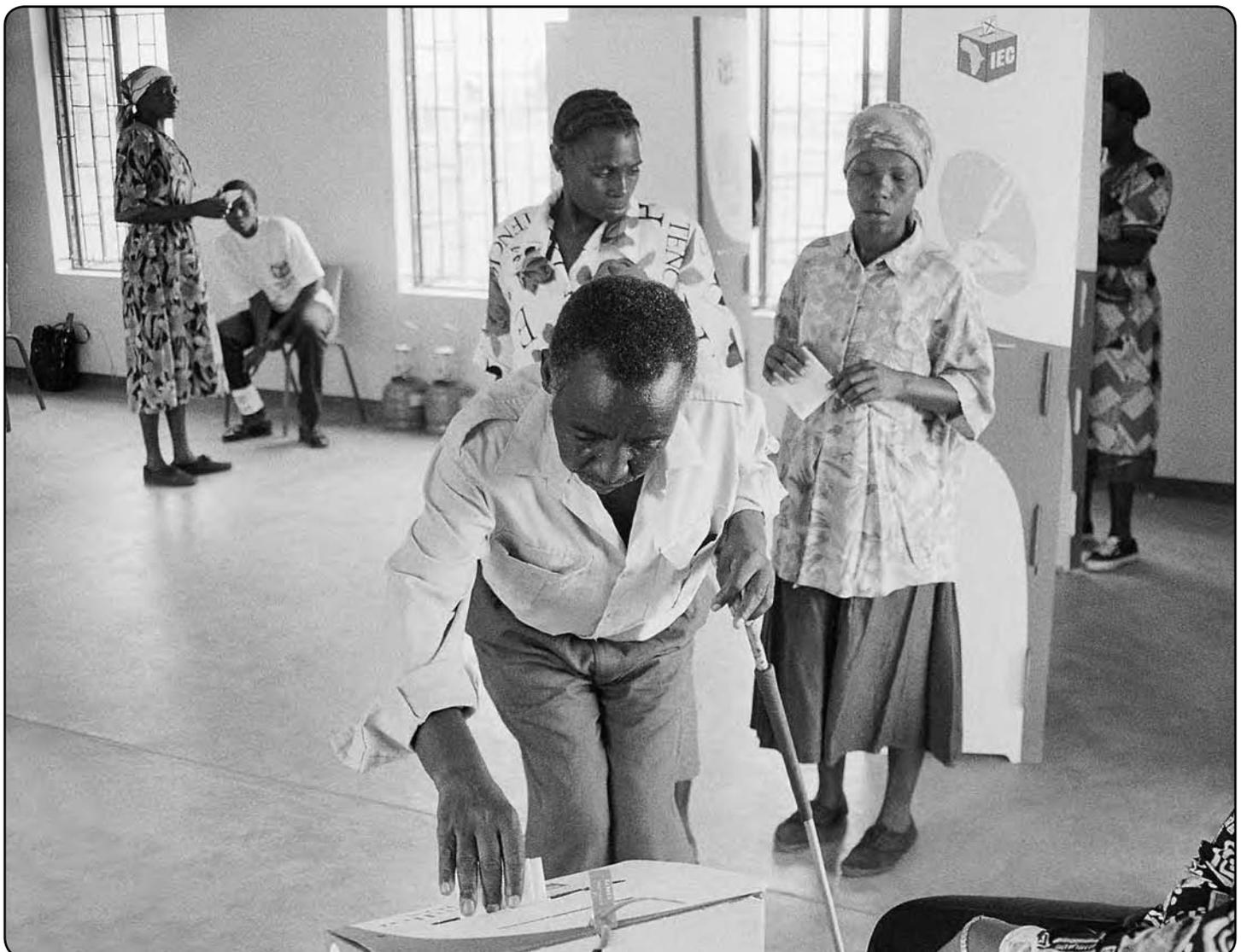
After the 1999 general election, of the 400 members of the National Assembly, 119 were women. These numbers grew to 131 women in 2004 and 172 in 2009.

In addition to this, a woman, Frene Ginwala, was elected as the first Speaker of Parliament. Many of these women ministers have been assigned to non-traditional posts such as foreign affairs, housing, health, minerals and energy, trade and industry, and defence.

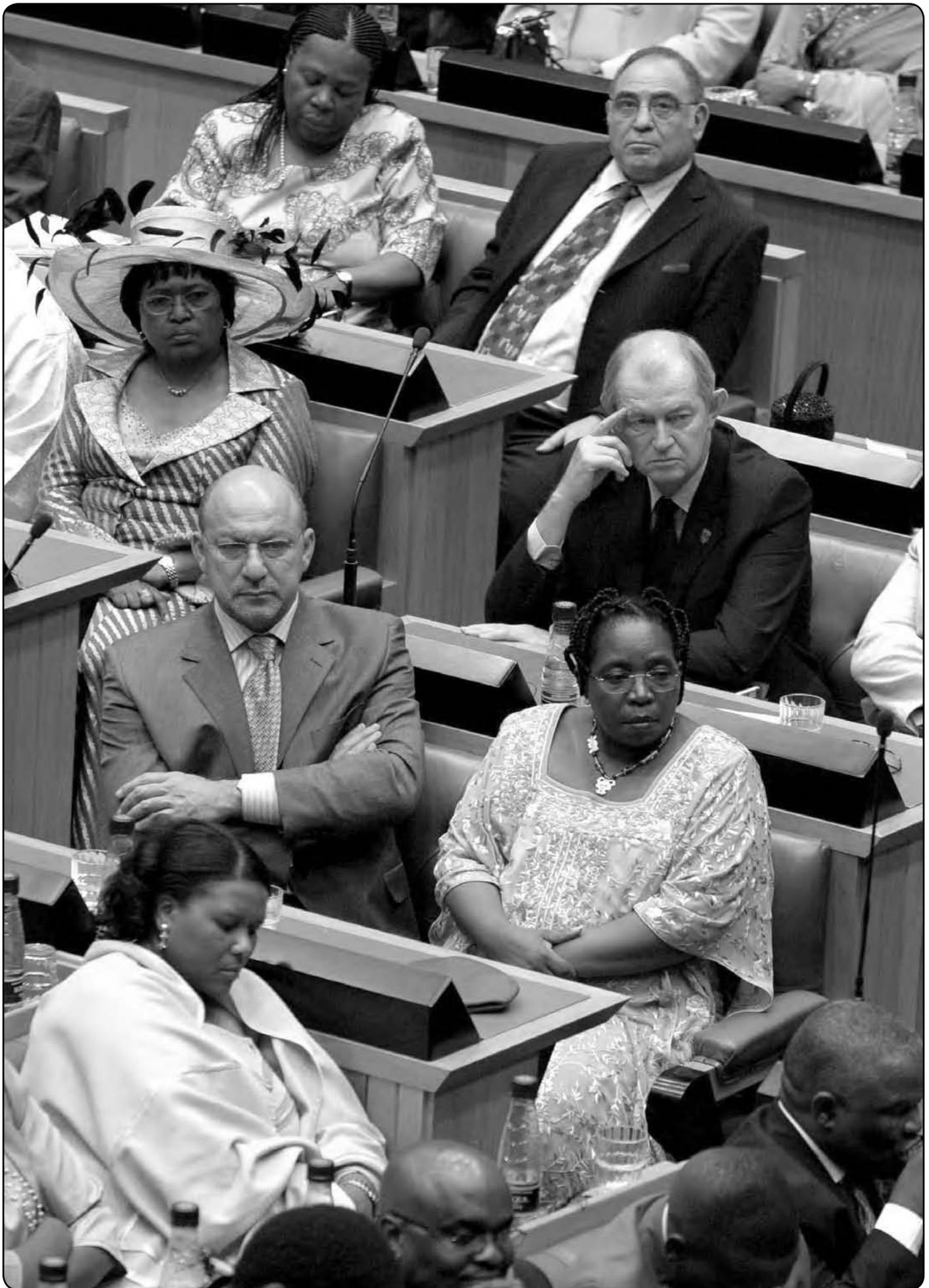
### THE FIRST FEMALE DEPUTY PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

History was made in 2005 when President Thabo Mbeki announced the appointment of Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka as the Deputy President. She became the first woman Deputy President of South Africa.

Mlambo-Ngcuka has an impressive record of welfare work and as an educator, a campaigner for women's rights and a senior politician.



Men and women, black and white, all vote in South Africa's Democratic Elections. Local Government Elections. Julesburg, Northern Province. 2000. Photograph by Andrew Tshabangu.



Women in Parliament, 2004. Source: Government Communication and Information System.



## FRENE NOSHIR GINWALA

1932-

**G**inwala left South Africa as a young student to help arrange the escape of the late President Oliver Tambo. She went on to complete her legal studies at the universities of London and Oxford before returning to Africa to become managing editor of Tanzania's main English-language newspaper. She was later deported and declared a prohibited immigrant. Ginwala worked in Tanzania, Zambia, Mozambique and the United Kingdom as an ANC official and as journalist and broadcaster in East Africa and Europe. She also participated at various United Nations, Unesco and other international conferences on South Africa, covering conflict research, women's issues, development and technology transfer. She was one of 14 international experts invited to advise the director-general on Unesco's programme on Peace and Conflict Research (1987-88) Ginwala returned to South Africa in 1990 to help establish the ANC Women's League and became the Speaker of the National Assembly of South Africa in 1994, a position she held till 2004.



Frene Ginwala, 2007. Photograph by David Goldblatt, supplied by African Media Online.

## ISSUES FACING THE WOMEN IN THE TWENTY FIRST CENTURY

**T**he country has achieved a reasonable level of prosperity and economic stability, but it has not been able to make a large enough dent on the widespread poverty and deep inequalities that it has inherited from its apartheid past.

South Africa is one of the most unequal societies in the world. The worst affects of poverty and inequality can be seen amongst women in rural areas and informal settlements. South Africa women are faced with a wide range of issues such as the high crime rate, domestic violence, child abuse, HIV/AIDS, poverty, poor local government delivery and unemployment.

### POVERTY

One of the most important issues for women in South Africa has always been that of poverty. During the apartheid years, black women were forced into the rural areas and left with very few choices. Some received money from their husbands who were working on the mines and in towns. This has left a legacy of devastating poverty of black women today, where the poorest of the poor are still living under extremely harsh conditions.

Women predominate in the rural areas, which are usually the poorest. Both in the rural and urban environment, women often have to take care of children, and this makes employment options difficult. Many children under the age of 7 years live only with their mother, while many others are left with their grandmothers so that their mothers can work.

The majority of rural black South Africans live in conditions that are inadequate with respect to shelter, energy, water and sanitation. They are heavily dependant on wood for household energy, as many households have no electricity or simply cannot afford basic water and electricity services.

The current government policy on free basic electricity, adopted in 2002, provides poor households with 50kw of free electricity per month, while the Free Basic Water Programme provides poor household with 6000l of free water per month. However, there are still many households that need to access this provision.

### PRIMARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

The biggest challenge facing the transitional government was the de-politicization of school grounds and transforming schools into institutions of learning under one national education system.

In 1993, President FW de Klerk established the Education Co-ordination Service to manage education during the political transition of the 1990s. Its task was to eliminate the duplication inherited from the Apartheid system. In January 1995, all government-run primary and secondary schools were officially integrated into one national Education Department, and the first stage of the transformation in education had begun.

Today, the backlogs from the Bantu Education and homelands system are still immense. A high illiteracy rate of 13.6 % (2010) continues, teachers in township and rural schools are poorly trained, and the matriculation pass rate remains unacceptably low. Access to formal education is increasing, but the quality of the education varies greatly, largely due to gender inequality and poverty.

While 65% of whites over 20 years old and 40% of Indians have a high school or tertiary education qualification, this figure is only 17% among 'coloureds' and 14% among the black population (2010). To deal with this problem, the government has introduced programmes such as the free schooling programme that is targeted at the poorest of the poor. Schools under this programme receive special funding from the state and do not charge school fees. However, a very worrying issue is that of sexual abuse against girls by male teachers and male students.



Teacher with her class of eighty children, Inanda 1983. Photograph by Omar Badsha.

## GRANTS AND PENSIONS

Due to the longevity of women, they have to support themselves for a longer period after retirement, making them more vulnerable to poverty in old age. The old age pension is the government's most significant poverty alleviation measure. Research has shown that it is effectively targeted at black women, mostly in rural areas. Women older than 60 with an annual income of less than R44 880.00 can apply for the grant of R 1 140.00 per month (2008).

There are often many people in the household that need to be supported with the grant, and pensioners often continue to work to make ends meet. Many women struggle to get pensions due to problems with identity documents and travelling distances to pay points. Despite all these shortcomings, the impact of the old age grant on poverty levels of women is significant.



Pensioners. Mamba Store, Amouti. Photograph by Omar Badsha.

## HEALTH

A big problem facing South Africa today is HIV/AIDS. Currently women in South Africa account for 58 percent of those infected with this dreaded disease (2011). Health problems associated with HIV/AIDS such as tuberculosis have increased six-fold for women, compared to three-fold for men in the same age group. This problem is compounded by the underemployment of women.

HIV/AIDS and other poverty-related diseases like tuberculosis and cholera, as well as the inability to pay for treatment, places a tremendous strain on South Africa's health care system. However, there have been significant improvements in some areas of basic health care delivery, such as antenatal care, combating acute childhood illnesses, and administering DOTS (Directly Observed Treatment Strategy) to combat tuberculosis in clinics across South Africa.

## THE GIRL CHILD

Poverty as well as the HIV/AIDS epidemic has vastly increased the number of school dropouts and child-headed homes, particularly amongst girls.

The culture that forbids girls to speak about abuse at the hands of teachers and elders in rural areas has seen a tremendous growth in teen pregnancy and also adds to the increase in dropout rates amongst girls. Many girls drop out of school before they reach Grade 12.

The government has implemented a no-fee policy in certain districts, to enable as many impoverished children as possible to attend school. It has also instituted a nation wide schools feeding scheme to address the effects of poor nutrition. These provisions have greatly decreased the dropout rate.



"Heading Home"  
(walking home from school).  
Rhulani. North-  
ern Province.  
Photograph by  
Liam Lynch.

## DOMESTIC VIOLENCE, RAPE AND ABUSE

Sexual violence pervades South African society, with one of the highest reported rates of rape in the world, and an alarmingly high incidence of domestic violence and child abuse. Unfortunately, many instances of assault and rape in South Africa go unreported. Victims are faced with an inefficient police and justice system. Women do not report rape out of fear and a lack of faith in the policing and judicial systems.

The South African government and the public have responded to this scourge. In 1996, the government made an attempt to protect the safety rights that women and children by passing the Domestic Violence Act (Act 116). In addition, the justice system has begun to prioritize sexual offences and police offices are being trained to care for rape survivors.



Assault victim. Julesburg clinic. Northern Province. Photograph by Liam Lynch.

## WOMEN IN THE WORKPLACE

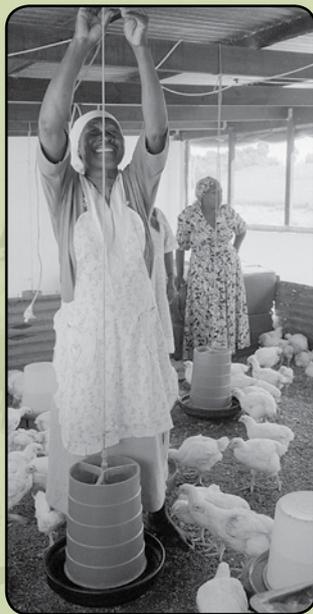
South African society remains a diverse and there are many challenges ahead.

Motherhood is still central to most women's lives and a woman's role in family life is still the basis of a morally sound, orderly and cohesive society.

Although great strides have been made, gender discrimination still takes place in the workplace, and while there are notable exceptions, women are still poorly represented in top managerial and executive posts countrywide.

Organisations such as the Businesswomen's Association of South Africa, who strive to provide ongoing opportunities to advance the interests of women in business, attest to the strides women have made in their struggle to shake off the shackles of the past against political oppression and gender inequality.

Workers on the women's poultry project. Inyavini, Kwazulu Natal. Photograph by Jeeva Rajgopaul.



Ndaya water project. Umbumbulu, Kwazulu Natal. Photograph by Jeeva Rajgopaul.

## ROLE OF NGOs AND GOVERNMENT INSTITUTIONS

There are vibrant Non-governmental Organisations, like People Opposing Women Abuse (POWA) and Women Against Women Abuse (WAWA), which were established in 1979 and 1989 respectively, to educate and support female victims of assault and rape. There are also NGOs, such as SONKE, who work towards promoting social cohesion between males and females in order to break the destructive cycle of violence.

The government's poverty alleviation programmes have become a key element in the consolidation of local government structures and the promotion of the principals of social, economic, cultural, civic and political rights of its citizens.

One such programme is the government's community based Public Works Program (EPWP). The programme aims to employ a million people by 2010. This programme was followed by the Expanded Public Works Program launched in April 2004. The programme is now in its second phase.

In addition, the local chapter of the international organisation Business and Professional Women (BPW), a fairly new entity in South Africa, is set to launch a national campaign to bring about change in business principles and the Companies Act so that women will have more say in making decisions in the workplace.



### CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

#### Make a poster

The importance of the events of 1956 is remembered every year on 9 August, the day on which the women marched to Pretoria. In our new democracy, this day is celebrated as a holiday – National Women's Day.

1. Divide into groups and pretend you are going on a march on Women's Day.
2. In your group, discuss what the issues are for women today.
3. Choose a message that your group would like to put on a poster.
4. Discuss who your poster is aimed at and who your message is for.

5. Now decide what words you are going to put on the poster. Try to keep your message simple and memorable.
6. Decide what images or pictures you want to use. You can draw them or cut them out of magazines and paste them onto the poster. Make the relationship between the words and the pictures clear. People need to get the message at a glance.
7. Design a rough poster before you attempt the final one.
8. To test if your poster works, show your rough poster to another group and get their comments.
9. Prepare your final poster and stick your posters onto the wall.

## WALL OF REMEMBRANCE



This wall honours a small selection of women who played a key role in South African history; it does not include or mention all the role players. For more profiles visit [www.sahistory.org.za](http://www.sahistory.org.za)

### OLIVE SCHREINER

1855 – 1920

Early South African feminist, anti-war campaigner, author and intellectual

### CHARLOTTE MAXEKE

1874 - 1939

Political activist, religious leader, South Africa's first black women graduate and one of the first black South Africans to fight for women's rights

### CECILIA MAKIWANE

1880 - 1919

The first registered professional black nurse in South Africa, early activist in the struggle for women's rights and protestor in the first anti-women's pass campaign in 1912.

### BERTHA MKHIZE

1889 - 1981

Political activist, trade unionist, President of ANC Women's League (1956)

### CISSIE GOOL

1897 - 1963

Political activist, civil rights leader, founder of the National Liberation League and the Non-European United Front, member of the Cape Town City Council (1938-1951)

### FRANCES BAARD

1901-1997

Teacher, trade unionist, National Executive Committee member of the ANCWL and FEDSAW and patron of the UDF

### JOSIE PALMER

1903 - 1979

Political activist and leading figure in the SACP and FEDSAW

### IDA MNTWANA

1903-1960

Political activist, first president of the ANCWL and first National President of FEDSAW (1954-1956)

### HELEN JOSEPH

1905 - 1992

Teacher, political activist, trade unionist and founding member of the South African Congress of Democrats and FEDSAW

### ANNIE SILINGA

1910-1984

Political activist, member of the National Executive Committee of FEDSAW and president of the Cape Town branch of the ANCWL

### FLORENCE MATOMELA

1910-1969

Teacher and ANCWL organiser and vice-president of FEDSAW in the mid-1950s

### LILIAN MASEDIBA NGOYI

1911 -1980

Teacher, political activist, trade unionist, founding member of FEDSAW, president of the ANCWL and first woman to be elected onto the National Executive Committee of the ANC

### HILDA BERNSTEIN

1915 - 2006

Author, artist, political activist and founding member of FEDSAW



FEDSAW poster. Source: Unknown

**HELEN SUZMAN**

1917- 2009

One of South Africa's most famous white parliamentarians and fighters for human rights

**ALBERTINA SISULU**

1918-2011

Nurse, political activist, member of the ANCWL and executive committee of FEDSAW

**MARY BENSON**

1919 - 2000

Author and anti-Apartheid campaigner

**FATIMA SEEDAT**

1922 - 2003

Political activist, member of the ANC and SACP and participant in the 1952 Defiance Campaign and 1956 Women's Anti-Pass March

**SONIA BLINTING**

1922- 2001

Member of the SACP, founder member of the Cape Town Friends of Cuba Society and organizer of the World Campaign for the Release of South African Political Prisoners

**LIZZY ADRIAN  
(NANNA) ABRAHAM**

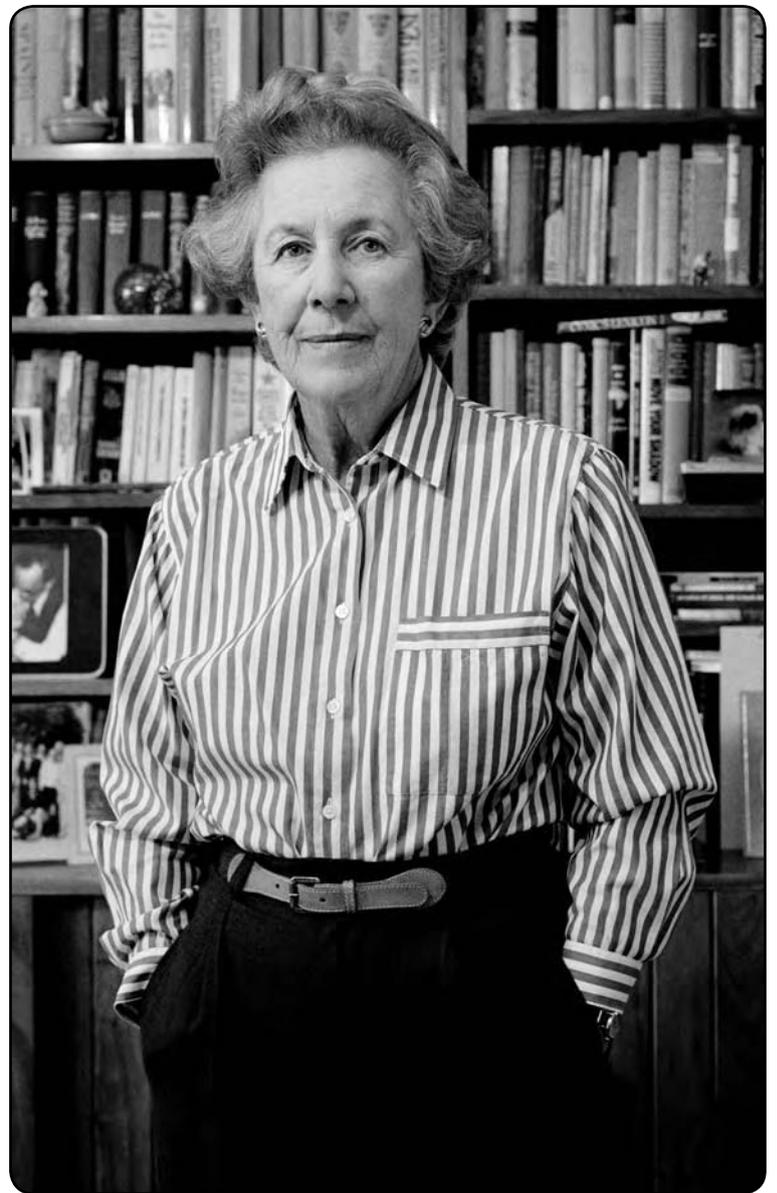
1925 - 2008

Political activist, trade unionist, general secretary of the Food and Canning Workers Union, Western Cape secretary of SACTU, member of FEDSAW

**LILIAN DIEDERICKS**

1925 -

Political Activist, involved in the 1956 Women's Anti-Pass March



Helen Suzman, Johannesburg, 1990. Photograph by Gisele Wulfsohn.

**RUTH FIRST**

1925 - 1982

Political activist, founding member of the Federation of Progressive Students at Wits University, Treason Trialist and killed by a parcel bomb while in exile in Mozambique

**ADELAIDE FRANCES (TSHUKUDU)  
TAMBO**

1929 - 2007

Political activist, wife of Oliver Tambo and Member of Parliament (1994-1996)

**FATIMA MEER**

1928 - 2010

Political activist, writer, academic, screenwriter, human rights and gender activist

**DR KESAVELOO  
GOONAM**

1906 – 1999

Medical doctor, Natal Indian Congress Activist, passive resistance and Indian women's rights campaigner

**VICTORIA MXENGE**

1942-1985

Nurse and lawyer, UDF and NOW activist, she was assassinated by the apartheid government

**BERTHA (MASHABA) GXOWA**

1934 - 2010

Member of the ANCWL, a defendant in the Treason Trial and founder member of FEDSAW and one of the key organisers of the 1956 Women's Anti-Pass March

**SHEILA WEINBERG**

1945-2004

ANC activist and supporter of the Black Sash and UDF

**SOPHIA WILLIAMS DE BRIJYN**

1938 -

Political activist, trade unionist and founder member of SACTU, leader of the 1956 Women's Anti-Pass March and member of the ANCWL National Executive Committee

**FLORENCE MKHIZE**

1932-1999

SACP and ANCWL activist, founding member of FEDSAW and the UDF

**DOROTHY NYEMBE**

1931-1998

Political activist, organiser for the ANCWL, FEDSAW member and led the Natal contingent at the 1956 Women's Anti-Pass March

**MOLLY BLACKBURN**

1930-1985

Political activist and civil rights campaigner, politician and Black Sash member



**CLASSROOM ACTIVITY**

**Write a biography**

Choose any woman that was politically active in the 1990s. Do some research using a library or the internet, and write a life story about the woman you have chosen. You should write about one page.

**Content outline:**

**THE CONTEXT:**

- Begin with an overview of the organisation the woman was involved in.
- Explain briefly the political climate in South Africa in the 1990s.

**THE LIFE STORY OF THE WOMAN YOU HAVE CHOSEN:**

- Give an account of her life, character and ideas.
- Explain why this woman can be regarded as a good leader.

- Your concluding paragraph should state what impression the woman you have chosen has made on you.

**TIPS FOR WRITING:**

- Your work must read easily, be in plain language, and should be textured, so that is not just a list of 'one thing after another'. Anecdotes and personal idiosyncrasies about will make it more interesting to read.
- Don't shy away from negative aspects of the person's character. All human beings have flaws in their characters!
- You should write a draft before you write your final piece of work.
- Use your own words and do not plagiarise other people's work!

## GLOSSARY:

**African National Congress (ANC)** - Founded in 1912 as the South African Native National Congress (SANNC), the ANC initially worked within the law to eliminate racial oppression. The ANC was banned in 1960 by the Apartheid government, but continued to function in exile and underground inside South Africa. In 1961, the previously non-violent ANC adopted a policy of armed resistance and established Umkhonto we Sizwe (Spear of the Nation) or MK. President F.W. de Klerk removed the ban on the ANC in 1990 and ANC leaders engaged in negotiations with Apartheid leaders which led to the 1994 democratic elections.

**Amnesty** - A complete and full pardon, removing all legal memory of an offence.

**ANC Women's League** - In 1943, the ANC accepted women into its membership and in 1948; the ANC Women's League was formed.

**Anti-Apartheid movement** - A general name for the international movement to oppose white minority rule in South Africa.

**Apartheid** - Literally "apartness" in Afrikaans. A policy of racial segregation further entrenched by the National Party after it won the whites-only election in 1948. It brutally enforced a highly stratified society in which whites dominated politically, economically, and socially at the expense of blacks.

**Bantu** - A term used to describe a family of languages spoken mainly in southern and eastern Africa. During Apartheid, the term "Bantu" was used as a derogatory term for black Africans.

**Bantu Education** - Educational system enforced from 1953 and designed to train black people for their role as inferiors in Apartheid society. Far less money was spent on educating black children than white children. There was large-scale resistance to Bantu Education, the most notable example being the Soweto Uprising of 1976.

**Bantustan** - Ethnically defined areas for Africans created on the basis of the "Native Reserves" (Land Act, 1913). Constituted only 13% of South African territory. Bantustans were to be given self-government and later independence in order to deny Africans citizenship rights in "white South Africa." 3.5 million Africans were forcibly removed to Bantustans. Widespread poverty in these areas helped employers secure a supply of cheap black labour. Today, all South Africans have political rights in a unified country, and Bantustans no longer exist.

**Black consciousness** - Ideology popularised by Steve Biko that aimed to liberate black people (Africans, 'coloureds', and Indians) psychologically through the realization of black self-worth and positive action.

**Black Sash** - Members were white middle class women who would stand silently in public places wearing a black sash as a symbol of mourning for the government's human

rights abuses. The Black Sash established Advice Offices in urban centres to assist with many issues, particularly the pass laws. Black Sash members also became involved in protesting forced removals, monitoring pass courts, and being a presence at political funerals in the 1980s.

**Civil Cooperation Bureau (CCB)** - A secret South African Defence Force unit created in 1986 with the purpose of disrupting anti-Apartheid activities in South Africa and abroad by assassinating resistance leaders and destroying ANC facilities.

**Civil disobedience** - Non-violent actions to refuse to obey unjust laws in an effort to change government policy or legislation without violence.

**Communism** - A political philosophy based on communal ownership of property. It argued that the workers of the world would overthrow the capitalist system. The first communist revolution occurred in Russia in 1917. People who supported the rights of the poor established communist parties in all corners of the world, including South Africa.

**Constitution** - the laws and principles by which a country is governed. A new constitution replaced the racist constitution after the 1994 election which provided the framework for a non-racial democracy.

**Convention for a Democratic South Africa (CODESA)** - Negotiating forum established by most political organizations in 1991 to carry out the transition from Apartheid to democracy in South Africa. A second CODESA met in May of 1992. It was succeeded by the Negotiating Forum.

**Federation of South African Trade Unions (COSATU)** - A national, non-racial federation of trade unions formed in 1979 that affiliated to the UDF in 1983. It was organized mainly by black workers and later evolved into COSATU.

**Federation of South African Women (FEDSAW or FSAW)** - Organized in April 1954 as an attempt to create the first inter-racial women's association. Active in the organization were a large number of teachers, nurses and other members of the small African professional class. A few trade unionists made an important contribution to the organization. The primary objective was to bring women together to mobilize for equal rights and recognition before the law. In August, 1956, it organized a march by 20,000 women on the Union Buildings in Pretoria to protest pass laws.

**Groote Schuur Minute** - Resolution of May 4, 1990 in which the African National Congress (ANC) and the South African government agreed to political negotiations and an end to armed struggle.

**Liberation theology** - Belief that Christianity preaches liberation of the poor and oppressed and that Christians should work for equality and social justice.

**Lobola** - Nguni term for groom's gift of cattle (ilobolo) for a bride (i.e. "bridewealth") as part of marriage ceremonies and family exchanges. Today, lobola can also be given in cash.

**Multi-Party Negotiating Forum** - On April 2, 1993, the Multi-Party Negotiation Process (MPNP) began in Kempton Park outside Johannesburg. It laid the foundations for an interim constitution that governed the country through the 1994 elections up to the adoption of a new constitution in 1996.

**National Party (NP)** - Afrikaner nationalist party that won the 1948 elections that ushered in Apartheid. The party lost power to the ANC in 1994, returned in 1997 as the "New National Party," and was then dissolved in 2005.

**Nationalism** - Strong adherence to one's nation and national identity.

**Pan-Africanist Congress (PAC)** - Founded in 1959 in a split from the African National Congress. The PAC rejected the ANC's non-racial policies and promoted African Nationalism and more mass action. It formed a militant wing, called Poqo, after the Sharpeville massacre and worked both in exile and underground within South Africa.

**Pass** - (also known as a dompas) Identification papers for African men and women with racial classification and other personal information, including employment status and history. The government used passes to restrict movement of black people. Passes criminalized millions of ordinary South Africans.

**Pretoria Minute** - Resolution of August 6, 1990 affirming the Groote Schuur Minute and setting out terms for further negotiations.

**Record of Understanding** - In 1992, Nelson Mandela and F.W. de Klerk signed the Record of Understanding: a promise to resume formal investigations. In addition, the document set a time table for the release of prisoners, a ban on dangerous weapons, fencing for hostels, and provided for the creation of an elected constitutional assembly to develop a new constitution for South Africa.

**South African Communist Party (SACP)** - Known as the Communist Party of South Africa (CPSA) from 1921-1953, it initially focused on the cause of white workers. By the late 1920s, it was oriented to the needs of black workers. The CPSA was declared illegal in 1950 and reformed as the South African Communist Party (SACP) in 1953. The SACP is now part of the "Tripartite Alliance" with the African National Congress and Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU).

**South African Congress of Trade Unions (SACTU)** - Founded in 1955 as a critical response to the decision of the Trade Union Congress of South Africa to restrict its membership to non-African unions. SACTU gained vast membership as the labour wing of the Congress Alliance.

**South African Indian Congress (SAIC)** - Established in May 1923 by a coalition of political organizations aimed at promoting Indian rights in Natal and the rest of South Africa. During apartheid, the SAIC cooperated with the African National Congress, jointly launching the Defiance Campaign of 1952 and joining the Congress Alliance.

**South African Students Organization (SASO)** - A Black Consciousness organization of black university students formed in 1969, with Steve Biko as its first president. SASO helped form the Black Peoples Convention in 1972.

**Total strategy** - Policy of the Apartheid regime developed in the late 1970s under the leadership of P.W. Botha. Aimed to respond to a perceived "total onslaught" on South Africa by Communists and the international community seeking to undermine apartheid. Military campaigns destabilized neighbouring countries and armed force was used to repress dissent in South Africa. Botha also initiated some political reforms that tinkered with apartheid but maintained white supremacy.

**Township** - Black residential areas on the outskirts of South African cities created by the Apartheid government.

**Transitional Executive Council** - A council formed in 1993 to oversee the transition from Apartheid to democracy. This process included the formation of an interim government, setting the terms for the 1994 election, and changing the South African flag and national anthem.

**Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC)** - Government body created by the Promotion of National Unity and Reconciliation Act of 1995 for the purpose of investigating politically motivated human rights violations committed from 1960-1994. Victims and perpetrators of human rights violations testified before the commission, often in public hearings. Amnesty was granted to applicants if two criteria were met: (1) the crimes were politically motivated, and (2) the applicant was fully truthful.

**Umkhonto we Sizwe (MK)** - Armed wing of the African National Congress established in 1961 to force the Apartheid regime to the bargaining table through acts of sabotage and, if necessary, military campaigns.

**United Democratic Front (UDF)** - Founded in 1983 as an umbrella body that unified numerous unions, and youth, religious, civic, and sport organizations to oppose apartheid. It was initially founded to protest the introduction of the Tricameral Constitution. It affiliated with the ANC and led mass protests and boycotts throughout the 1980s. It disbanded in 1991.

This booklet was compiled by South African History Online (SAHO) for the Department of Basic Education. It should be used as a teaching aid by high school teachers and students taking History or Life Orientation as a subject.

The information in this booklet provides an overview of a period in modern South African history and does not include or mention all the role players and events. For more information on the role of women in our history visit [www.sahistory.org.za](http://www.sahistory.org.za)

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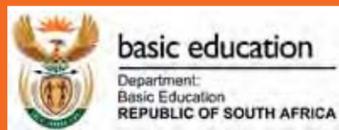
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## A BIENNIAL PUBLICATION ON HISTORY AND HERITAGE BY THE DEPARTMENT OF BASIC EDUCATION

The Department of Basic Education will publish a biennial booklet on history and heritage. The 'Celebrating Women in South African History' launches this series of publications. While this inaugural publication is focussed on certain women who have made a mark in South Africa's struggle for liberation, it is envisaged that future publications will examine the role contemporary women played across the different spheres of life, from arts and culture, to sports, business and academia.

This publication does not only promote the strengthening of the teaching of history but seeks to present this part of our history and heritage, which previously received little attention in the mainstream. It is fitting that this inaugural publication is launched in the month of August, as it's the month dedicated to celebrating and commemorating the role of women in the South African calendar. Future publications will be devoted to other events and people who shaped and continue to influence our history and heritage. We encourage all schools and training institutions to use this publication for various education activities.



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