

(S.A.W) (C.H.S)

TO THE MATRON OF BARAGWANATH HOSPITAL AND THE PRINCIPAL  
OF THE TRAINING COLLEGE FOR NON EUROPEAN NURSES

We have come here today, as mothers and women, to protest to you, the Matron of Baragwanath Hospital, and to you, the Principal of the Non European Nurses Training College, against the request for nurses to provide identity numbers for training and for registration and to explain to you the dangers to the African nurses and to the African women which flow from this request.

We protest to you, as women, as nurses, and as the authorities in this hospital representing the S A Nursing Council from whom you receive instructions and we request that you will forward our protest to those in authority above you, to the S A Nursing Council and to the Minister of Health.

We represent and we speak on behalf of many women who could not be here with us today but they are watching us and thinking of us. Their hearts are with us today, for it is for their daughters as well as our daughters that we come.

We want to tell you what the pass means to women -

It means that homes will be broken up when women are arrested under pass laws.

It means that children will be left uncared for, helpless and mothers will be torn from their babies for failure to produce a pass.

That women and young girls will be exposed to humiliation and degradation at the hands of pass searching policemen.

That women will lose their right to move freely from one place to another.

If nurses carry passes, they too will be exposed to all this and yet, knowing this, the S.A. Nursing Council seeks to compel African nurses to take out reference books - passes - in order to produce an identity number for registration.

We who are mothers fear for our young daughters, we have entrusted them to you and to the matrons of many other hospitals for their training, not knowing that the reference books would be forced upon them. Do not tell us that the signing of these forms has nothing to do with the issuing of passes; we are not prepared to allow our daughters to sign any form which makes any provision for the identity number, for we fear that the government or the S.A. Nursing Council, as the instrument of government policy, will use these forms, if they are signed, as a means to coerce the nurses into accepting passes and identity cards.

We women have already made it clear to the S.A. Government that we are opposed to the whole pass system. On August 9th, 1956, 20,000 women went to the Union Buildings in Pretoria to tell the Prime Minister that we shall not rest until all pass laws and all forms of permits restricting our freedom have been abolished.

Today we know that Verwoerd, who hesitates to send the pass units to the large towns and cities for fear of the

.....opposition

opposition of the women, hopes to introduce the passes into these areas by compelling nurses to accept them lest they lose their profession and their livelihood for lack of a number.

We know of the courageous stand of the nurses. We know that this may mean the sacrifice of their careers and we come here to say that we support these brave nurses, the women to whom freedom means more than a career and to tell you that we shall not permit our daughters to submit identity numbers, be they African, Coloured, Indian or European, for we are women of all races, united in our determination that no nurse shall be compelled to accept a pass or an identity card. Rather would we withdraw or withhold our daughters from the nursing profession.

We protest to you that this demand for identity numbers is an outrage upon womanhood; it is a stain upon the nursing profession, so universally honoured, that the S.A. Nursing Council should have allowed itself to be exploited for political ends and we charge you both, as Matron of this great hospital, and Principal of the Training College, to convey our condemnation to the Council.

Furthermore, we protest against the scandalous Nursing Amendment Act passed last year, which introduced apartheid into this once honourable profession, where women of all races met and worked as nurses, united in their noble vocation. We fear the effect of the differential standards of training which may be imposed upon the nurses, and those of us who are non European women claim the right to make this protest, for it is our children, our families, who would be nursed by those who would receive an inferior training. We say for you and all the world to know, that a life is a life, and a child is a child, no matter what the colour of the skin. Death and disease know no colour bar.

We call upon you as women and nurses, as Matron and as Principal, to listen to us who speak to you today, to those who wait outside making their protest in dignity to those for whom we speak who could not be with us for  
WE SHALL NOT REST UNTIL WE HAVE WON FOR OUR  
CHILDREN THEIR FUNDAMENTAL RIGHT TO FREEDOM, JUSTICE  
AND SECURITY.

**Collection Number: AD1137**

**FEDERATION OF SOUTH AFRICAN WOMEN 1954-1963**

**PUBLISHER:**

*Publisher:- Historical Papers Research Archive*

*Location:- Johannesburg*

©2013

**LEGAL NOTICES:**

**Copyright Notice:** All materials on the Historical Papers website are protected by South African copyright law and may not be reproduced, distributed, transmitted, displayed, or otherwise published in any format, without the prior written permission of the copyright owner.

**Disclaimer and Terms of Use:** Provided that you maintain all copyright and other notices contained therein, you may download material (one machine readable copy and one print copy per page) for your personal and/or educational non-commercial use only.

People using these records relating to the archives of Historical Papers, The Library, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, are reminded that such records sometimes contain material which is uncorroborated, inaccurate, distorted or untrue. While these digital records are true facsimiles of paper documents and the information contained herein is obtained from sources believed to be accurate and reliable, Historical Papers, University of the Witwatersrand has not independently verified their content. Consequently, the University is not responsible for any errors or omissions and excludes any and all liability for any errors in or omissions from the information on the website or any related information on third party websites accessible from this website.

This document is part of a collection held at the Historical Papers Research Archive at The University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa.