

USEFUL STATISTICS & FACTUAL
MATERIAL

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Women and Apartheid

Excerpts from two of the papers—on the effects of apartheid on the status of women in South Africa and on the role of women in the struggle for liberation—prepared for the World Conference of the United Nations Decade for Women, held in Copenhagen in July 1980.

In preparation for the Conference, an International Seminar on Women and Apartheid was held in Helsinki from 19 to 21 May, organized by the Non-Governmental Organizations' Sub-Committee on Racism, Racial Discrimination, Apartheid and Decolonization, in co-operation with the United Nations Special Committee against Apartheid, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the secretariat of the World Conference of the United Nations Decade for Women. Participants included representatives of Governments and Parliaments, leaders of liberation movements, about 60 representatives of non-governmental organizations and representatives of United Nations bodies and specialized agencies.

The Seminar concluded with the unanimous adoption of a Declaration and a series of recommendations for action by Governments, the United Nations system, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations and individuals. It drew the attention of all Governments and peoples to the oppression, exploitation and persecution of millions of women under apartheid in southern Africa and to their heroic struggle to eradicate apartheid, and it appealed to them for urgent and concerted action in support of the women under apartheid in their legitimate struggle. The final documents of the Seminar were transmitted, through the Special Committee against Apartheid, to the World Conference of the United Nations Decade for Women.

At the core of South Africa's system of *apartheid* lies the need for a cheap and constant supply of labour in order to ensure the continued exploitation of, and profit from, the country's great mineral wealth. Gold, diamonds, uranium, copper, manganese, platinum and vanadium lie in critical quantities beneath its soil, making South Africa vitally important to most of the industrialized countries of the world. The labour force used to extract these resources has been found within the African population, and in order to maintain it, the South African regime has found it necessary to exert considerable control over its black population. The system of *apartheid* has therefore evolved, with its extensive laws, in order to establish control over every facet of the lives of the African members of the population. The fundamental characteristic of this system is that its legal structure, as well as its political and economic structure, is firmly based on racial discrimination. The ideology of racism provides justification for, and reinforces, the extreme inequality that persists in South Africa.

The population figures for South Africa give some indication of the extent of this inequality. In mid-1977 the South African Government estimated the population at 26,946,000, comprising four official population groups: 19,369,500 Africans, 4,379,000 whites, 2,432,000 Coloureds and

765,000 Asians. Of these, only the whites are permitted to elect the Government, which is entirely white, and the whites alone promulgate the laws.

Two of the most far-reaching aspects of *apartheid* are the system of migrant labour and the establishment of bantustans, or reserves, for blacks, based on the premise that Africans can live in a white urban or rural area only in order to sell their labour. When they are no longer considered economically productive, they are expected to return to the reserves to live with their families, who are not allowed to accompany them to the white areas but must remain in the reserves, subsisting on the land. The reserves are enclaves located in various parts of the country; together they constitute only 13.5 per cent of the territory.

Because it is impossible to live off the land, which is generally non-arable, and because of heavy taxation, African men have been forced to seek work in the white areas. This need is backed by laws that require every adult male to register for work with a labour bureau. Those African men who have permanent residential status in the urban areas represent a small minority and must, in general, live without their families, since their wives are seldom given permission to join them.

Every African, male or female, must carry a "pass" from the age of 16. This document must be kept in his or her possession at all times, since it indicates whether or not the bearer is lawfully in a particular area. If not, he or she is subject to immediate arrest. The pass laws enable the Government to regulate the flow of Africans into the white areas. Africans are not permitted in those areas without a pass unless born there or unless they have worked there continuously.

The list of inequities suffered by black South Africans is a lengthy one. Whites, for example, consume 60 per cent of the nation's income, occupy 86.5 per cent of its land, are eligible for free and compulsory education, enjoy extremely good health and live, for the most part, in luxurious homes with the service of poorly paid domestic workers. Africans, on the other hand, do not have free or compulsory education. A limited number of schools cater to only a small percentage of the African population and follow a different and grossly inferior syllabus. The pupil-teacher ratio is roughly 50 to 1 for Africans and 20 to 1 for whites. The housing provided for Africans in the towns is inadequate, lacking running water or electricity. The overcrowded and sparse conditions add to the hardships of town life in general. Poverty causes extensive malnutrition and disease. The medical service provided in the towns is inadequate, while that provided for the rural population is extremely limited. The effect of this situation is reflected in the high infant mortality rate, which is estimated at five times that of the white population.

Although the policies of *apartheid* are detrimental to the whole black population, it is the women who are most affected. For while men constitute the majority of the cheap labour force, women are relegated to a shadowy position, expected to remain in the reserves and to support their families without the help of their menfolk. This creates special problems for women, who already suffer discrimination based on their sex.

THE EFFECT OF APARTHEID ON WOMEN IN RURAL AREAS

African women in South Africa, being both black and female, suffer a triple oppression. As Africans—which for the most part defines their class position—they have to contend with the restrictive and repressive *apartheid* legislation, which ensures alien control over all facets of their lives. In addition, as women, they have to contend with the fact that they are regarded as dependents and as inferior to men; as such, they are even further discriminated against within the framework of *apartheid*.

The reserves or bantustans

The rapid deterioration of the economic and social role of women since the establishment of *apartheid* has increased their workload to in-human proportions as they try to produce enough from the land to feed their families. With the men off working as migrant labourers, the women face an arduous existence, working at their daily chores in the home and in the field.

The absence of men from the rural areas when they are “on contract”, working as poorly paid migrant labourers, has an extremely adverse effect on the women left behind in the reserves. One of the rationales for paying such extremely low wages to African migrant workers is the assumption that the wives and children of these so-called migrants remain in the reserves and secure their families’ subsistence from the land. The employers are able to get away with these low wages, which are consistently below the Poverty Datum Line—that is, not enough for basic subsistence—because the wives and children of the workers live in the reserves and are expected to provide their own subsistence.

However, it is impossible for the four million women, children and old people who live on the reserves—which constitute only 13.5 per cent of the total area of South Africa—to subsist on them. Land hunger is chronic in these areas, with the result that agricultural production has stagnated or declined over the years. In addition, women’s work has been extended to include all of the work involved in cultivation, as well as such tasks as preparing mud for hut walls and thatch for roofs and raising cattle, a time-consuming task, since, in addition to milking the cows twice a day, the cattle need to be taken out to graze every morning, brought back at sunset and closed in byres at night.

While it is not possible to survive solely off the land, neither are the wages paid the migrant workers sufficient to supplement the reserve incomes. In order to set aside a portion of their hard-earned wages to send home, migrants have to make a considerable personal sacrifice. Even with the best of intentions, these contributions cannot do much to alleviate the harsh conditions of those remaining behind. The supplements are generally erratic and of varying amounts; some simply never arrive. Large numbers of families are forced to subsist without them, and no rural community is exempt from the problems caused by lack of financial support from male relatives working on contract.

The effect of migrant labour on women and their families does not stop at economic hardship. Women also experience considerable emotional stress in living apart from their menfolk and having to bring up their children alone.

The disruption of family life is one of the cruellest aspects of *apartheid*. Men are forced to stay away for months on end, at best returning for a few weeks a year, but often not seeing their family for years at a time. They become alienated and set up a new life in the towns, while their wives wait month after month hoping for a letter and for money.

Despite the suffering that women must undergo through the break-up of their families, many understand that it is not their husbands but the social conditions resulting from the *apartheid* laws that are responsible.

The men suffer too. Not all those living in the towns break ties with their families in the rural areas. Then there are large numbers of migrant workers who never see the urban centres. As they are shunted from the reserves to mining compounds, where they have little contact with women, they experience great loneliness and count the days when they can return home even for a short visit.

Resettlement camps

One of the most inhuman expressions of the policies of the *apartheid* regime is the programme of resettlement, under which over two million people have been removed to remote, undeveloped areas of the reserves. This is done by the Government to eliminate so-called "black spots", pockets of land owned by Africans in areas declared "white" by the Government or areas considered too close to white-owned farms or towns. Forced removals also take place under influx control laws, in order to reduce the number of Africans living in white urban areas. "Non-productive" Africans must leave, and if such individuals have no homes or families, the only alternative is a resettlement camp.

It has been estimated that the resettlement villages or camps will eventually hold close to four million people. Once again, it is the women who have been hardest hit by these policies. Considered fundamentally non-productive, they constitute the majority of those being expelled from the urban areas. When communities are uprooted, the already small male population is further diminished as men leave to seek work because of the increased level of poverty.

THE EFFECT OF APARTHEID ON WOMEN IN URBAN AREAS

Permission for an African to reside in a "prescribed" urban area in South Africa has to be granted; it is not a right. An African must be there for one specific purpose—namely, to provide labour for the industrial sector. This fact gives direction to much of the *apartheid* law, with the result that three million so-called "superfluous" Africans have been expelled from the urban areas since 1970. The majority of these people, because they are judged to have no useful purpose, are women.

Every effort is made to keep African women out of the urban or prescribed areas. The laws and regulations governing their movement in the urban areas are so extensive, pervasive and intricate and are so arbitrarily and indifferently carried out by the governmental officials that only a small proportion of women can be considered settled "urban dwellers". The rest are confronted with the daily possibility of being "endorsed out" and sent back to the area in which they were born, even if they have lost all ties with that area, or of being considered "displaced" and sent to resettlement camps.

The key to legal residency in the urban areas is to be a "section tenner", that is, to qualify under Section 10 of the Bantu (Urban Areas) Consolidation Act of 1925, as amended by the Bantu Laws Amendment Act of 1964. Section 10 governs the right of an African to be in a prescribed area, and sets down the conditions under which he or she may remain there. While a "Section 10" African is permitted to be in a white urban area, his or her status is not necessarily permanent or secure. The subdivisions to Section 10 of the Act dictate the level of permanence:

Section 10 (a) covers those who were born in the urban area and have lived there continuously since birth. There are cases of children losing their 10 (a) status because they were sent to relatives in the reserves while their mother was working;

Section 10 (b) covers those who have worked for 10 years continuously for the same employer or who have lived lawfully and continuously for 15 years in such an area. A term of imprisonment exceeding six months will rescind this status;

Section 10 (c) covers wives of men who qualify under Section 10 (a) or 10 (b) and entered the area legally and "ordinarily reside" with their husbands. Because of the embargo on the entry of women into the urban areas, it is extremely difficult for a man to bring his wife from outside the area to live legally with him. In addition, the phrase "ordinarily resides" implies that a wife is living with her lawful husband in quarters that are considered suitable for married people. She cannot claim this if he is officially resident in a hostel or in authorized accommodation on his employer's premises.

It is not difficult to appreciate how insecure even those who appear to have every reason to remain in the city must feel, for the legal status of a woman may be rescinded in a moment on a largely variety of pretexts. She can retain her legality only as long as her husband does not divorce her, desert her or die, and as long as she does not lose her job and is not classified as "idle". Strict enforcement of Section 10 regulations result in greater hardships for women than for men.

For instance, women have not been lawfully able to enter an urban area for more than 72 hours in over a decade. A woman might therefore have remained in the area for any number of years without problem and suddenly be forced out if discovered. Few women are able to qualify under Section 10 (a) or (b) of the Urban Areas Act. Many have spent disqualifying periods away from the area, and employment opportunities are very much more limited for women. Marriage to a qualified African does not legalize her status, regardless of how many years she has been

married, if her first entry was unlawful. Marriage can in fact have the reverse effect for women who qualify in terms of their fathers' status. Unless she qualifies in her own right, a woman will lose that status if she marries an unqualified man. If her husband lives in a different urban area and she goes to live with him there, she will lose any qualifications she may have under Section 10 (a) or (b) without necessarily gaining a new one under Section 10 (c).

In addition, the Government's ability to declare an individual an "idle" person provides a convenient catch-all for declaring many more people—especially women—unqualified. It is possible to be declared "idle" or "undesirable" for a wide range of reasons, for example, if a person who is over the age of 15 and under the age of 60 (for a woman) or 65 (for a man) and is capable of working is normally unemployed. Refusal to accept employment offered by a Labour Bureau unless a person has "acceptable" reasons and dismissal within the first month of employment from more than two jobs in any six-month period or on more than three occasions in one year is also grounds for being declared idle or undesirable.

Since it is legally the responsibility of the persons declared idle to prove that they have a right to be in a particular area, officials have considerable latitude and power in applying the law and are thus able to undermine the already fragile hold that Africans, particularly women, have on remaining in a prescribed area.

The lives of women living both legally and illegally in the urban areas are further complicated by the chronic shortage of housing for Africans in urban areas. Since June 1968 it has been impossible for an African to buy a house in an urban area. Africans have only been able to rent their houses, and houses bought in accordance with prior regulations could only be sold to the local authorities; they could not be inherited by members of the owner's family. There are also numerous restrictions limiting the number of people able to apply for a house. Only male heads of family over the age of 21 are entitled to a house, and they must have dependents who are lawfully in the area.

If all the conditions and documentation required for the application for a house are fulfilled, the family then has to resign itself to a four- to five-year wait, maybe longer, for the actual allocation of a house. In the meanwhile, they will have to live as lodgers, again with the appropriate permits, in the homes of others (who themselves must have permits to take on lodgers). The overcrowded conditions for all concerned place a strain on daily life.

The allocation of a house, however, does not mean that a family is automatically reunited. The clue to who lives in a house lies with the names listed on the original application. If children were away at school, for instance, at the time their parents applied for a house, their names would not be included on the house permit. Others might have been living with relatives in the rural areas. Once parents are finally given their house, permission to have their children with them is very often refused.

Unless a woman is qualified to be a resident of an urban area in her own right, she will find herself without a roof over her head should she

be deserted, divorced or widowed. Unqualified women are not allowed to remain in their homes, even if they have dependent children and are able to pay the rent. If a woman has an adult son residing with her, he may be permitted to take over the tenancy. If he is not, the family will either be allowed to stay and seek lodgings or will be "endorsed out" to a reserve area at the discretion of petty government officials.

A divorced woman may be given permission to stay on in her home only if she was not the guilty party in the divorce suit and has been granted custody of her children, if she qualifies in her own right to remain in town, if she can pay the rent and if her former husband has agreed to vacate the house. If he has remarried immediately, he may choose to remain in the house with his new wife.

For those who do not qualify for family housing the choice is between living as registered lodgers in other people's already overcrowded houses or in singles' quarters, where available.

As children cannot live with their mothers as lodgers, they must be sent "back" to the reserves, even if they have no contact with people there. African women living illegally with their children are in constant fear that they will be found out. To make matters worse, in order to register a child for school, parents must obtain a "pink card", which is issued only for children listed on a residential permit and which is impossible to procure if the mother is living illegally in the urban areas.

The situation forces a woman into an exaggerated dependence on her husband. Many a woman finds herself prolonging an unhappy marriage and tolerating her husband's behaviour—afraid that he might desert or divorce her—rather than risk the consequences.

As a result of these restrictions, a rapid growth in the number of squatter camps has taken place, particularly in Cape Town, which was declared a "Coloured preferential area" in 1966. Since it is even more difficult for African women to get permission to remain in this area, many have chosen to live in a constant state of insecurity as long as they can maintain some semblance of family life. Squatter camps such as Modderdam, Unibel and Crossroads have flourished, as men have left their single's quarters in nearby townships and together with their wives and children built small shacks out of whatever material was available. The first two camps were razed by government bulldozers, but Crossroads, with a population of some 20,000, still stands. The Government appears wary of the bad publicity that would ensue if it razed this one as well, and after much pressure has promised new housing for those "legally" in the area.

The people of Crossroads, while risking arrest and suffering hardships, have established a tightly knit community of families that have managed to organize most of the basic services for themselves. Crossroads' very existence is an act of defiance, particularly on the part of the women who, more than the men, risk arrest and further dislocation.

In summary, the African women in the urban areas of South Africa are not tolerated in the towns because their labour cannot be exploited sufficiently to satisfy the needs of the white capitalist sector. Nor are they

able to survive in the rural areas. An end to this dilemma will come only with an end to the repressive system that has created these restrictions.

WOMEN AND EMPLOYMENT IN RURAL AND URBAN AREAS

Despite the efforts of the Government to keep the African women in South Africa out of the wage labour market, the number of employed women has been growing. Driven off the land by its inability to provide subsistence, women, like their men before them, have taken the route to the urban areas or onto white farms—more often than not, illegally.

The point has now been reached where one out of three African workers is a woman. In general, women hold the most unskilled or semi-skilled jobs, and when they do the same work as men they earn considerably less. Of the 1,508,080 women workers who were employed in 1970, the majority were either service workers, mainly domestic servants, numbering 724,020, or farmworkers, totalling 655,040. Both of these areas of work exclude unemployment benefits or other forms of social security and are exempt from minimum wage guidelines. Furthermore, the average earnings of African women are less than half those of African male workers and amount to only 8 per cent of the income of white males.

Agricultural workers

Farm workers are among the lowest paid of all workers in South Africa, and once again women workers receive even less than men. Whenever possible, men seek other forms of employment, but as women seldom have this option, they have increasingly been drawn to the white farms. Many of the women feel that because they are illiterate, they could not be hired as industrial workers.

Since the early 1960s "squatters" and labour tenants on white farms have been forced to move. White farms and estates have increased in size, eliminating small peasant holdings as they move towards increased mechanization. The white farms and estates need seasonal workers at harvest time and during other periods of intensive work; thus, the demand for permanent employees is decreasing. It is the fortunate few who have been able to find employment at all. Farm wages are pitiful and, on many farms, are paid solely in kind, either in the form of corn meal, the staple food, or part of the crop harvested. Women constitute the majority of casual farm workers.

Domestic service workers

A considerably larger proportion of women than men are service workers in South Africa (716,700 women as compared to 295,240 men, according to the 1970 census). Women domestic workers have to carry the double burden of their own and their employer's household chores, as

well as the worry resulting from having to leave their children at home, often unattended.

As in most other areas of the economy, the number of people employed in domestic service is on the decline. With the economic squeeze that came in the 1970s, domestic workers came to be regarded as a luxury, and in many instances domestic workers have to accept lower wages or work fewer hours in order to retain their jobs and the permits needed to remain in the urban areas.

There are many restrictions placed on their lives. Women who live at the homes of employers cannot have their husbands stay over for even one night, even though their rooms would either be separate from the main house or would have a separate entrance. Those who do so illegally run the risk of being caught in one of the regular police raids of domestic servants' quarters. Even in situations where both husband and wife are domestic workers within the same area, and their respective employers are agreeable, it is still against the law for the couple to live together. To strengthen the intent of this law, a government proclamation now makes the employer subject to a fine, should a domestic worker's husband or children be found with her overnight.

Industrial workers

During the past 30 years the composition of the industrial workforce has undergone considerable change. It was initially made up of a large number of white women who have since been replaced by skilled and semi-skilled black workers throughout the secondary industry. By 1970, only 4 per cent of the production workers were white women, 50 per cent were Coloured women and 31.4 per cent were African women. This situation is reflected in the food, beverage, liquor, tobacco, clothing and foot-wear industries. Of the total number of workers in manufacturing industries, one out of every five is a woman. However, of the 214,000 women workers, only 70,000 are Africans. Women are concentrated in certain industries, particularly, clothing, textiles, food processing and canning, and their wages are lower than those of their male counterparts. In the textile industry, women are paid 20 per cent less than the industrial minimum wage. Not only is equal pay not guaranteed by law, it is against government policy, which is consistently defended by government officials.

As part of the minimal development programmes for the reserve areas, so-called "border" industries have been planned with the intention of providing work for reserve area residents just outside—on the "borders"—of the bantustans. In fact, only a few such factories have been built, and many of the border factories that do exist have been built by employers eager to escape the wage determinations which lay down minimum wages—meagre as they are—in the major industrial areas.

Skilled and professional workers

The small number of women professional and clerical workers reflects the basic lack of education provided both African males and

females and the very small percentage which reach university level, as well as the lack of opportunity open to those with an education.

There are two areas of professional work where women figure prominently—namely, teaching and nursing. However, as recently as 1973, there were no African women lawyers, judges, magistrates, engineers, architects, chemists, pharmacists or veterinary surgeons. Even for professional employment, women doing the same work as men receive less remuneration.

Further discrimination against women can be found in situations not related to wages. For instance, there is a regulation that prevents an African woman from continuing to be employed in the public service and at black university colleges once she marries—a condition that is not applied to male employees.

Unemployment

Whatever the field of work, both women and men are affected by the high rates of unemployment. An assessment by a South African economist of the unemployment question paints a gloomy picture:

“More than half of the black workers who have come onto the labour market since 1970 are still without work . . . No fewer than 57 per cent of the increase in the African labour force between 1970 and 1976 have remained unemployed. Add to this that the unemployed are mainly the young people and that the bulk of those that are unemployed are under the age of 30, and it is clear that a situation is being created that bodes ill for the country.” (A. Jacobs, *Rand Daily Mail*, 19 October 1978.)

The rapidly rising unemployment rate has a spiral effect on employed women. Not only are they losing their jobs in large numbers, but women from the reserves whose husbands have lost their jobs are now seeking employment in order to alleviate the situation, thus creating even greater competition than before. In some cases, men are being hurt more than women, as factories choose to replace male workers with female workers because of the lower salary scales for the latter.

The *apartheid* Government's solution to the problem of unemployment does not, as can be anticipated, lie in the transformation of the society. Government supporters, for instance, cite other solutions, such as the statement made by the General Secretary of the white-controlled trade union congress, Arthur Grobbelaar: “The long-term solution is birth control.”

WOMEN AND SOCIAL SECURITY

Social security is provided at such a negligible level in South Africa to African individuals and families that it makes little, if any, impact on the conditions of life. Only a small number of people fall within the requirements that make them eligible for such benefits. The assumption of the capitalist sector and the Government that justifies the lack of provision of such services parallels the rationale for cheap labour: the subsistence sector will provide for itself. But the poverty of the subsistence sector, as

described earlier, leaves no doubt that reserve families are incapable of providing such services.

The limitations on those who qualify for unemployment insurance, for instance, are severe. Among those excluded are: (a) those earning less than 10.50 rand per week, or less than 564.34 rand per year; (b) domestic workers and agricultural workers (and hence the majority of women workers); and (c) seasonal workers and those whose earnings are calculated on a commission basis. The benefits paid amount to 45 per cent of the weekly earnings, for a maximum of 26 weeks per year.

But even those Africans fortunate enough to be eligible find many obstacles in their way. In one town people have been signing up for unemployment benefits for months, some since the beginning of the previous year, without receiving any money. In Natal people were prevented from applying for unemployment insurance because the Department of Labour had run out of forms. Others have complained that they were sent on interviews for jobs for which they were unqualified or which had already been filled and that they were deliberately being kept on the move to prevent them from applying for benefits. As the rate of unemployment has increased, so have such abuses.

Old-age pensions are even more restricted. As of October 1978, the maximum monthly pensions for Africans was 23.75 rand, compared to 88 rand for whites. In order to qualify for pensions in the urban areas, the applicant must prove that he or she is living there lawfully, which necessitates that his or her name is listed on a residential or lodgers permit. Many old people are simply not able to provide documentary proof of their age, and even when a pension has been approved, an individual can find it withdrawn after a period of time because the district administrator suddenly decided that the proof was insufficient.

Because of the principle that the aged must return to the reserve areas, facilities for their care in the urban areas are totally inadequate. Official policy concerning the provision of old-age homes is that these should be built in the bantustans, where they are the responsibility of the bantustan "government".

Only four homes for the elderly exist in the urban areas, and not even one home has been provided in Soweto, the largest African township in the country.

WOMEN AND HEALTH

The white population of South Africa enjoys an extremely high standard of health care. There are no malnutritional diseases to be found among them, there is a more than adequate supply of doctors per thousand population and the hospitals have gained a high reputation in the treatment of patients—white patients. The infant-mortality rate among South African whites—20.9 per 1,000 live births in 1971—is only slightly higher than that of such countries as the United States, Canada and Great Britain.

The fact, therefore, that the African population of South Africa suffers under some of the worst conditions of health in the world is clearly

an outcome of the *apartheid* social order. The infant-mortality rate of this population tells the story: in 1969 the rate recorded in the Transvaal, for example, was 216 per 1,000 live births.

Among the African population of South Africa malnutrition has reached epidemic proportions. Malnutrition takes the form of kwashiorkor (a disease resulting from protein deficiency and characterized by swelling of the stomach and limbs), marasmus, pellagra and, less commonly, rickets, scurvy, beri-beri and anaemia. Communicable diseases play havoc with malnourished young bodies, so that a high rate of tuberculosis, typhoid, tetanus, measles, polio, diphtheria, hepatitis and pertussis is common.

As women are responsible for feeding their children and many families are without fathers, it is the women who must face the ordeal of watching their children fall ill when only minimal health services are available and there is no money to pay for such services anyway. In addition, malnutrition has extremely serious effects on the health of pregnant women and on foetal development.

But it is not only a person's physical health that suffers so grossly under *apartheid*. As a World Health Organization study noted:

"It is unthinkable that racism would be without implications for mental health. Healthy mental functioning and personality development depend on the presence and continuity of such essential experiences as the individual's sense of security and worth, freedom for personal growth and identification with a community of equals. Racism undercuts at the roots of healthy mental life by depriving its victims of these experiences and by conditioning them into accepting the myth that the cause of their inferior status in society lies irrevocably within themselves."

Migrant labour is the cause of much of the mental illness experienced by Africans, particularly women; the pass laws and other restrictions have maintained a high level of pressure and insecurity for the African population; and hypertension, which is usually associated with psychological stress, is extremely common among Africans living in the urban areas.

While figures are not available to assess the effects of these factors on women in relation to men, it is not unreasonable to suppose that such symptoms affect women gravely and probably more than they do men.

WOMEN AND EDUCATION

The goal of establishing a separate educational system for African children was clearly and unambiguously stated in 1954 by Dr. H. F. Verwoerd, who later became Prime Minister of South Africa:

"When I have control of native education I will reform it so natives will be taught from childhood to realize that equality with Europeans is not for them. . . People who believe in equality are not desirable teachers for natives.

"There is no place for him [the Bantu] in the European community above the level of certain forms of labour. . . For that reason it is of no

avail for him to receive a training which has as its aims absorption in the European community. . . Until now he has been subject to a school system which drew him away from his own community and misled him by showing him the green pastures of European society in which he is not allowed to graze.”

This philosophy still provides the basis for the education of Africans.

In general, there is little distinction between the education of girls and boys under the so-called Bantu educational system: for neither is it free or compulsory.

While statistics for illiteracy rates among the African population of South Africa are not available, it would appear that the percentage of girls among the population that do attend school is relatively high for Africa. Throughout the lower grades and secondary school, girls generally outnumber boys, the number dropping only for the matriculating class. While 543,164 girls began school in 1970, only 2,064 reached the final grade, a minute percentage of the female population of that age group. In contrast, school is compulsory through age 16 for whites.

In the absence of statistics, the reasons why girls generally outnumber boys in school, except in the final grade, can only be conjectured. It is likely, for example, that for the majority of males education is not seen as a stepping-stone to a better future since most will be forced to work as migrant labourers. On the other hand, girls are not restricted in the same way and are encouraged to become primary-school teachers, an avenue of work open to a relatively large number of women.

In March 1973, there were 58,319 teachers in African schools, all but 900 of whom were African and close to two thirds of whom were women. The policy of recruiting women primary-school teachers came after a decision made in 1954 and described by Dr. Verwoerd as being necessary “in order to save money in teacher training and salaries, and also because women are generally better than men in handling small children”.

Conclusions

While the position of women in relation to men in South Africa parallels that of women in other parts of the world, and particularly in other parts of Africa, the process of working towards equality for women has been stultified by *apartheid* and racism. *Apartheid* permeates, controls and distorts all facets of the lives of African women, making it impossible for them to benefit from even the most minimal kinds of programmes being instituted elsewhere. It is clear, therefore, that to begin to encourage the women of South Africa to play an equal role in the political, economic and social structures of their country, the present *apartheid* system must be abolished and replaced by a government and a social order in which women are able to participate fully. Women's crucial and positive role in the fight to eradicate the existing oppressive regime testifies to the fact that they can continue to contribute effectively to the restructuring of a new society.



At Crossroads, a so-called squatter camp in the Cape Town area, the women have attempted to maintain a semblance of family life in the face of government attempts to evict them.



THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN THE STRUGGLE AGAINST APARTHEID

Women in South Africa, since the turn of the century, have emerged as primary catalysts for protests against, and as challengers of, the *apartheid* regime. With all the disabilities and devastating effects of *apartheid* on the status of women that have already been described, women have never lost sight of the fact that meaningful change for them cannot come through reform but only through the total destruction of the *apartheid* system. Thus the common exploitation and oppression of men and women on the basis of colour has led to a combined fight against the system instead of a battle of women against men for "women's rights". While women desire their personal liberation, they see that as part of the total liberation movement. Although there is no doubt that the overt leadership has been dominated by men, the seemingly unacknowledged and informal segment of society controlled by women has been the key to many of the most significant mass movements in modern South African history. It is only in the very recent past that the crucial role played by women in raising basic issues, organizing and involving the masses has become more widely recognized.

Women in the trade unions

Although women have been involved to some degree in all kinds of organizations in South Africa, from church groups to liberation movements, in many ways it was the trade union movements that became the spawning ground for women organizers and in which women first rose to positions of importance in South Africa. Trade union actions such as strikes also served to politicize some women.

The organizing of women began in the 1920s, principally in the laundry, clothing, mattress, furniture and baking industries. While several black national federations were formed and dissolved, the one that endured in spite of the new labour legislation of the 1920s was the Non-European Trade Union Federation, formed in 1928.

During the 1930s, women trade unionists were in the leadership of the opposition towards growing Afrikaner nationalism and *apartheid* in the unions. Their position was that racial divisions should not split a union. They sought free compulsory education for all races, an end to job reservations by race and training for all races. Women were being both organized and trained to organize and lead.

As the economy developed in the 1930s and 1940s, with the growth of capital accumulation and an increased demand for labour, women rapidly became urbanized to fill this need. These demographic changes, coupled with the crippling labour legislation that would follow the assumption of power by the National Party in 1948, made the 1940s the crest of the period in which women organized other women and black industrial workers.

Efforts to organize Africans were crippled by the National Party's labour legislation—the Industrial Legislation Commission (1950) enforced *apartheid* in the trade unions; under the Suppression of Com-

munism Act, 56 trade union activists were banned by 1955; the Industrial Legislation Bill (1956) made job reservations the law. But the women still led strikes, even though strikes by Africans were then illegal.

Historically, the trade union movement helped to inspire women in many other areas, but the main impact was that the unions provided a training ground for women political leaders. Female factory workers learned new methods of organizing and were exposed to the principles of non-racial worker solidarity.

Since the founding of the African National Congress (ANC) Bantu Women's League in 1913, women have been active in other organizations, especially those based in urban areas. Women played an active role in the Campaign of Defiance Against Unjust Laws during which, in 1952, many were arrested. They also helped to organize the Congress of Democrats, a white organization in alliance with the ANC and the Coloured Peoples Congress. However, the lack of a broad-based women's organization made the participation of women sporadic. In addition, almost all activity was urban-based, with little or no contact with women in the reserves.

The Federation of South African Women

With these organizational problems magnified by the domination of the National Party and its rapid expansion of *apartheid* legislation, the time was ripe for the formation of the Federation of South African Women (FSAW) in 1954. Its members, said to represent some 230,000 women, were drawn largely from the Congress Alliance, but especially from the ANC's Women's League. FSAW had two primary aims: to work for majority rule and end the policy of *apartheid*; and to build a multiracial women's organization that would also work for the rights of, and freedoms for, women.

The creation of the FSAW marked the start of a period of expansion of the political involvement of women, especially black women, as illustrated in the examples that follow.

In December 1954, the FSAW campaigned for a boycott of schools controlled by the Government. The women organized on a house-to-house basis, but when the State announced that all children out of school on a certain date would be expelled, the boycott collapsed.

In January 1957, after a one penny fare increase was announced by the Public Utility Transportation Company, which transported some 25,000 Africans each day from the townships of Alexandra, Sophiatown and Lady Shelburne, Africans began a bus boycott by walking up to nine miles each way, some leaving at 3:00 a.m. Within three weeks, the 25,000 Africans from those towns had been joined in sympathy by 20,000 other Africans. The boycott was organized mainly by women and was led by a woman.

The State responded with mass raids in which 6,606 Africans were arrested and another 7,860 subpoenaed. A rally of 5,000 people in Lady Shelburne was attacked by two police baton charges resulting in 17 Africans being hospitalized. The Government announced legislation that

would result in a permanent end to bus services to the African towns. But the Africans continued to resist, and after five months the Native Transportation Amendment Act No. 52 of 1957 rolled back the fare increase.

In 1959, Cato Manor, near Durban, became the site of large-scale protests against the "Bantu authorities" when the municipality attempted to end all illegal liquor stills. Beer brewing had been an important source of income for African women. Under the law, African men had to drink in municipal beer halls.

In June 1959, 2,000 women marched to express their grievances. Others entered a beer hall and destroyed the beer. They organized a beer boycott which led to wide-scale uprisings all over Natal. During 1959, an estimated 20,000 women in Natal protested and more than 1,000 were convicted in the courts.

The anti-pass campaign

The courage and determination displayed by South African women in their refusal to accept the restrictive passes epitomizes their over-all participation in the struggle to eradicate *apartheid*.

The Government attempted to get women to carry passes as early as 1913 but was met with such severe resistance that it did not make the attempt again until the National Party came to power in 1948. By the time the Native Abolition of Passes and Co-ordination of Documents Act was enacted in 1952, a large number of women had moved to the urban areas to seek employment and keep their families together. For the National Party, this represented a permanent urban labour force and, therefore, a serious threat to the *apartheid* structures they were designing. The 1952 Act was intended to permit only the necessary labour for industrial and domestic work into urban areas. Passes were to be extended to women. However, as a result of the earlier campaigns, the Government did not announce until October 1955 that passes would be issued to women beginning in January 1956.

As soon as the announcement was made that they must carry passes, the women organized a demonstration. The women in Black Sash staged an all-white protest; in Pretoria, 2,000 African women rallied.

Passes were first issued in March 1956 in the Orange Free State in the town of Winburg, where many women were arrested when they burned their passes. At that time, although it was not mandatory to carry a pass, if one had a pass it was illegal to destroy it.

On 9 August 1956, in a protest organized by the FSAW, more than 20,000 women came to the Union Buildings in Pretoria to see the Prime Minister. When he refused to see them, they placed petitions with more than 100,000 signatures in his office.

In Lichtenburg in the western Transvaal, in November 1956, when government officials arrived to register women, more than 1,000 women met them to protest. When the police made a baton charge, the women threw stones in retaliation. The police opened fire and two Africans were killed.

The strategy of the Government was still to issue passes in the villages first. Thus, women in Johannesburg were asked to carry only "per-

mits of identification", which the police began to demand. On 12 May 1957, some 2,000 Africans attended an anti-permit meeting at Sophiatown. They requested an interview with the Mayor and, on 16 May, more than 20,000 met to send off a seven-person deputation from Sophiatown. Six thousand people escorted them to City Hall where they met with the Mayor, who agreed to suspend police action and issue exemption certificates for women.

In Nelspruit in the eastern Transvaal, women attacked the car of the magistrate when he announced that passes would be distributed. When five women were arrested, 300 women marched to demand their release. Police made a baton charge and then opened fire. Four people were hurt. The following day, the women organized a strike. Police fired on crowds again and eight Africans were wounded. When the police conducted extensive raids they arrested 140 people. The women were forced to accept the passes.

On the day that passes were to be distributed in Sanderton in south-eastern Transvaal, all 914 women who went to protest to the Mayor were arrested for taking part in an illegal procession.

But the women were undaunted. In July 1957, in Gopane Village in the Baphurutse Reserve, some women burned their passes. When 35 women were arrested, 233 more volunteered to be arrested. When officials arrived in Motswedi and Braklaagte to register the women, the villages were deserted. In June 1957, at Pietersburg in the northern Transvaal, 2,000 women stoned officials who came to register them. When the officials returned in July, 3,000 women greeted them, again forcing their withdrawal.

In October 1957, officials began to register women in Johannesburg. While many women accepted the passes as impossible to avoid, many thousands protested during the week of 21-28 October 1957. More than 2,000 were arrested.

Although the will to resist the passes had not changed, the reality of Government coercion forced more and more women to accept them. Resistance and demonstrations continued, but by March 1960, 3,020,281 women, or about 75 per cent of the adult women, had accepted the passes. Winnie Mandela, one of the leading South African women who has herself been severely restricted by the regime for almost 17 years, explained why women were forced to accept passes:

"We have to carry passes which we abhor because we cannot have houses without them, we cannot work without them, we are endorsed out of towns without them, we cannot register births without them, we are not even expected to die without them."

In December 1959, the Pan Africanist Congress of Azania (PAC), which was formed in 1959 as a second major African nationalist organization in South Africa, announced that it would launch "decisive and final positive action" against the pass laws under the slogan "no bail, no defence, no fine". ANC was also planning a major campaign against the passes with varying tactics, to commence on 31 March 1960.

Robert Sobukwe, President of PAC, announced that his organization's campaign would begin on 21 March 1960. Members were

requested not to bring their passes and to surrender themselves for arrest at the nearest police station. When released from jail, the campaigners would again offer themselves for arrest. PAC members had been instructed to act strictly in a spirit of non-violence. If ordered by the police to disperse, Mr. Sobukwe said, they should do so quietly.

The Sharpeville Massacre

On the morning of 21 March 1960, thousands of Africans gathered in locations around the country. In Sharpeville, up to 20,000 came to the police station: the atmosphere was tense. Police opened fire; 67 Africans were killed and 186 wounded, including 40 women and 8 children. More than 80 per cent were shot in the back while fleeing.

What has become known as the Sharpeville Massacre marked the beginning of an even more repressive era. A state of emergency was declared. ANC and PAC were both banned. Massive arrests were made under new restrictive legislation, while women led hunger strikes to protest conditions in the jail; it became virtually impossible to organize. A stay-at-home demonstration planned for the last three days of May 1961 did not succeed after the police had arrested upwards of 18,000 Africans in large-scale raids.

Proclamation 268 and Government Notice 1722 of 26 October 1962 made it obligatory for African women to carry passes as of 1 February 1963.

Former ANC President and Nobel Peace Prize winner Albert Luthuli later wrote about the women's actions:

"Among us Africans, the weight of resistance has been greatly increased in the last few years by the emergence of our women. It may even be true that, had the women hung back, resistance would still have been faltering and uncertain The demonstration made a great impact, and gave strong impetus Furthermore, women of all races have had far less hesitation than men in making common cause about things basic to them."

The Black Consciousness Movement

A period of intense repression followed the Sharpeville Massacre and the declaration of the state of emergency. With ANC and PAC banned, the possibilities of African trade union organization weakened. A period of ostensible political inactivity became inevitable.

On the surface, women turned towards activities to ease the burdens of the deprivations created by *apartheid*. Thus, the African Self-Help Association, formed in 1964, established numerous day-care centres and children's feeding programmes.

However, during that time, ANC and PAC began to develop both an underground inside South Africa and operations in exile, and the roots of what has become known as the Black Consciousness Movement (BCM) developed inside South Africa. Thenjie Mtintso, a journalist, who was arrested and banned several times and is now in exile, described what Black Consciousness means:

"Black Consciousness says to the black man 'whatever you have been doing so far, you have been trying to emulate whites. You have lost your values. You have been uprooted. Now go back to your roots and from there you can emerge as a man in your own right. Black Consciousness goes on to black solidarity and black power."

This is not to say that Black Consciousness is anti-white, but it does call for new strategies. Mtintso discussed what this means:

"Whatever we do in this country, be it on the economic, social or political level, it has to be by blacks, for blacks, period. It doesn't matter how well-meaning white people may be . . . they can never deliver me from the hands of the Nationalists . . . whatever they do, they must try to work within their own community and concentrate on liberating their counterparts. I'll be doing the same thing in the black community."

Helen Joseph, one of the crucial white leaders opposing *apartheid* for decades, believes that in the present context, whites must be content with a supportive role and accept what some interpret as an apparent rejection of their full participation. She said: "There isn't the same opportunity now. Don't forget that the whites that identified themselves with the struggle of the people for justice were very few." Others, such as Winnie Mandela, disagree that whites are rejected as participants in the liberation struggle:

"Black Consciousness means to develop the awareness in people, to develop their pride, and it does not confine itself to blacks only. Black people include all the oppressed peoples of this country whatever the shade of their skin. All those who are prepared to honour what we are fighting for . . . are included in this concept."

The Black Women's Federation

In December 1975, 210 delegates representing 41 organizations gathered in Durban to found the Black Women's Federation (BWF). BWF had similar roots to the Federation of South African Women which, as has been described, was multiracial and very powerful until 1963 when most of the leaders were banned and it ceased to exist as an effective organization, although it was never dissolved. The 1975 organization had the same objectives but allowed only black membership because it was based on opposition to the legislation governing blacks.

BWF worked in both urban and rural areas, which its predecessor did not do. It attempted to teach women to realize their own potential and to increase their awareness and level of education. It began literacy, nutrition and health classes. It was starting to establish small cottage industries and was preparing to work in the areas of housing, trade unions, rural development, and the legal disabilities of black women. But the Government acted swiftly to crush BWF. Within a year, seven leaders had been detained, and the entire organization was banned in October 1977.

Soweto uprisings

The Black Consciousness Movement served to increase the awareness of youth of the hated "Bantu laws". During the June 1976 uprisings in Soweto, African youths put their lives on the line to protest Bantu education, which their parents had been fighting against for more than two decades. At least 600 children were killed by the South African police when they demonstrated in the streets.

Sikose Mji, a member of the Black Consciousness Movement, described her participation in the uprisings:

"One morning I decided I also had to participate, I also had a part to play—and I joined the crowd . . . there had been already lots of killings, and the children were playing in the streets, when suddenly a police van passed, a young seven-year-old child raised his fist and said to the police: 'POWER'—whereupon the policeman got off the van and aimed at the child and shot at him directly . . . When the police started to shoot

Primary-school teaching is one of the few avenues of work open to African women. The pupil-teacher ratio in South Africa is roughly 50 to 1 for Africans, as compared to 20 to 1 for whites. Education for Africans is neither free nor compulsory, and their school syllabus is grossly inferior to that for whites.



that is when students picked up stones, hit back, and took dust-bin lids to protect themselves . . .”

Nkosazana Dlamini, the former Vice-President of SASO, discussed in an interview the reaction of parents and their role after the killings:

“Even initially, during the peaceful demonstrations, parents supported the pupils . . . But what really thrust the parents into action was the brutal police killings. The police had always been ruthless with peaceful demonstrators, but nobody expected the cold-blooded murder of young children. So besides their solidarity with young people they were angered—and their hatred and rejection of the whole system came to the surface. They were completely with the students in their militancy. Even the workers’ strikes were very successful.”

Soweto is now a symbolic rallying cry of South African blacks when they discuss resistance.

The women of Crossroads

Just as Soweto has come to symbolize black resistance to “Bantu laws”, so Crossroads has come to symbolize resistance to the policy of forced population removals.

Crossroads is a so-called “squatter camp” in the Cape Town area. In 1977, when the Government announced that the camp would be demolished and the 20,000 residents sent to the Transkei, the women organized the Crossroads Women’s Movement. Contrary to the Government’s propaganda that Crossroads is a transient camp, the average length of time that heads of households have lived there is 18.2 years while that for spouses is 11.7 years. Even so, because of the very complicated and restrictive legislation that keeps urban families apart, less than 10 per cent of the spouses are legally in Crossroads. This, of course, serves to increase their vulnerability to the police. It is the women who risk most through harassment and arrest by the police. But it is also the women who have no future outside Crossroads, away from their husbands and families. For them, it is Crossroads or nothing.

The rallying cry of the women has been “we are not moving”. In June 1978, more than 200 women demonstrated at the Bantu Affairs Administration Board, where seven women expressed their grievances to the officials. They were all called in by the police 10 days later. The police began sweeping raids, arresting women and children in their homes and when they went to the wells for water. In July, a multiracial crowd of between 4,000 and 5,000 people participated in a two and a half hour service for the preservation of the camp, despite a police warning that the meeting was illegal. The police expanded their raids in September: 800 people were arrested and three were shot, one of whom died. When the first lot of bulldozers arrived, the women sat down. Three people were killed. The women continued to protest. They sought and received international support.

Finally, in December 1978, the Government, by then under massive international pressure, announced that it would not force the residents to leave the Cape Town area.

Conclusions

As in most societies, there is no doubt that the top leadership in organizations in southern Africa opposing *apartheid* and racism has been held by men. However, especially in South Africa, women have frequently been the ones to raise the primary issues and to organize and involve the people around those issues.

In almost all cases, women were first brought into the struggle when they saw the attempt by the Government to destroy their family structure and with it the basic fabric of their respective societies. Thus, in South Africa, women reacted most vigorously to the introduction of passes in the 1950s and the consequent restrictions on families; to the mass killings of their children two decades later in Soweto; and to the attempt to destroy urban family life as epitomized by Crossroads.

In South Africa, women were very active in trade unions and in women's federations. Participation in political parties was not meaningful since African voting rights were virtually non-existent. The Black Consciousness Movement was a major activity centre in the 1970s.

That the women have had a significant impact in southern Africa is beyond question. Women have participated in ever-increasing numbers both within their countries and in exile, always at risk to themselves and to the groups they represent. The level of risk is reflected in the severity of government repression against women. In South Africa, one can hardly think of a prominent organizer who has not been detained, banned or imprisoned. By eliminating the leadership, the authorities destroyed the Federation of South African Women. When this tactic did not work with the Black Women's Federation, it banned the entire group.

In South Africa, the women won the early anti-pass campaign, they achieved a roll-back of bus fares and apparently saved Crossroads. They did not end "Bantu education" and have had to accept passes even though they withstood the final imposition for 11 years. However, in the light of all the odds against them in those major campaigns, it would have to be concluded that, on balance, the women did make an effective contribution to the struggle for liberation.

The women of southern Africa have increasingly attracted the attention and solidarity of women and men internationally. The importance of solidarity has been expressed by Winnie Mandela:

"Over the past fifteen years, when I was confined and restricted . . . I got my inspiration from the very knowledge . . . that the struggle is an international struggle for the dignity of man . . . just that knowledge alone that we belong to a family of man in a society where we have been completely rejected by a minority . . . this alone sustains you."

Mrs. Mandela also said:

"It is only when all black groups join hands and speak with one voice that we shall be a bargaining force which will decide its own destiny . . . We know what we want . . . We are not asking for majority rule; it is our right, we shall have it at any cost. We are aware that the road before us is uphill, but we shall fight to the bitter end for justice . . ."

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