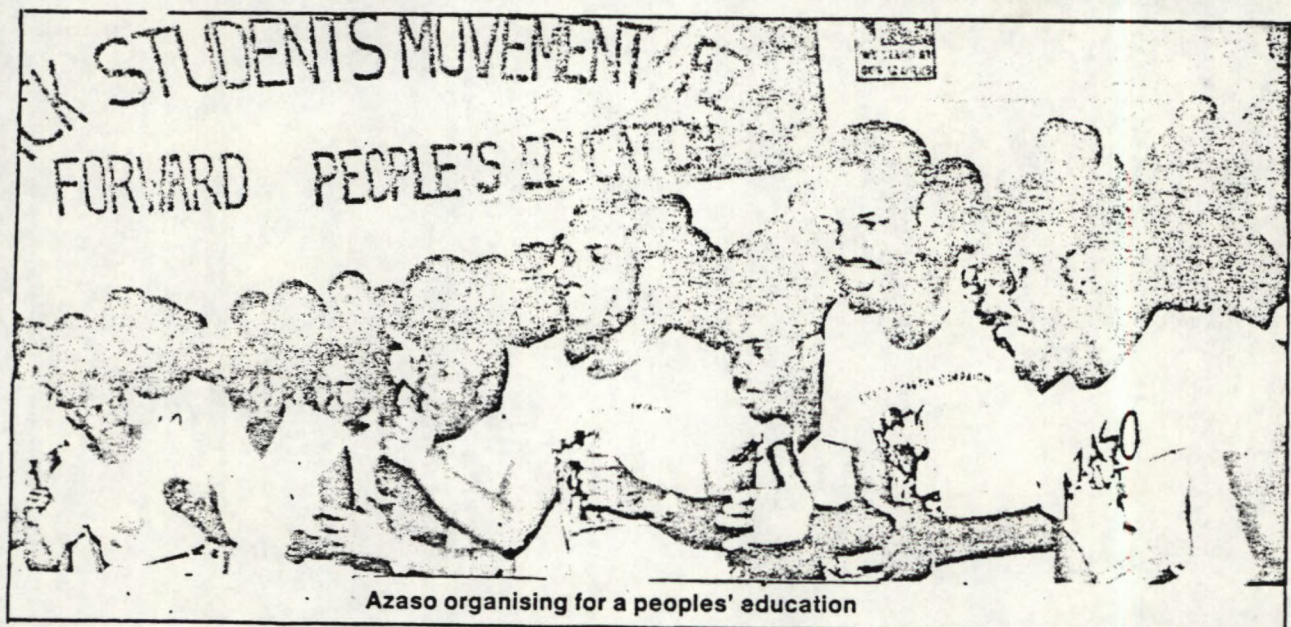


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# AZASO

Azanian Students Organisation  
Regional Newsletter (Tvl)



## EXEC MESSAGE

The National Executive Committee of Azaso welcomes all of you to a new environment - the technikon, training college or university.

You will realise during your stay here that your noble ideals about a technikon, college or university are contradicted and frustrated by the present racist education system. As it were, for most of you have found out that making it to tertiary level of education has not been an easy task. Most of you have struggled through adverse conditions in primary and secondary schools to reach the point where you find yourself today. You have gone through overcrowded classrooms, poorly qualified and even unqualified teachers, lack of democratic student representation (SRC's), corruption in the apartheid

education departments and other adverse conditions caused by the political, economic and social situation in this country.

We know very well that those of us who ultimately reached this level of education are only a selected few out of the oppressed majority of this country. We only need to think back at the number of people who started with us in primary schools to realise how few are those who ultimately reach this level. Those of us who look at the situation narrowly will conclude that these majority who could not make it were not intelligent or hard-working enough to make it, but if we look at the situation more analytically we will realise that most of these people had more against them than us.



# WHAT IS AZASO?

If you were taking keen interest in newspapers, TV and other media during 1984, especially during the anti-election campaign, you sure have heard about Azaso.

## Aims and Objectives

Azaso is a national students organisation representing all Black ("Coloured", "Indian" and African) students in technikons, teachers' training colleges, some seminaries and universities. Its aims amongst other things is:

- \*to unite the students of South Africa
- \*to take up their demands and fight for a people's education
- \*to represent them nationally and internationally
- \*to further the workers' struggle and
- \*to work towards the liberation of women

## History

Azaso was formed in 1979 after the students realised that without the unity that existed during the days of the South African Students Organisation (Saso), the students would not be able to solve problems they faced at their places of study. These problems were, amongst others, bad food, lack of accommodation, harassment, unjust and unreasonable laws, expulsion of pregnant students, troublesome lecturers, the lack of democratic representation, and the lack of a clear political direction among students. As all these problems were common to students throughout the country, Azaso provided and still promotes unity in action by students.

Azaso was founded as a Black Consciousness organisation. In 1980/81 students realised the narrowness and disadvantages of this approach and thus Azaso has at its 1981 historic congress, made the Freedom Charter its beacon and foundation and uses the non-racial democratic approach.

The non-racial approach means that Azaso does not identify its enemies or its friends by the colour of their skin. It will work with anybody, be it a student, a priest or worker, whose aims and approach do not clash with those of Azaso. It believes that there is room for all those who have interest in and who wish to participate in the struggle. Further Azaso believes that for the struggle we must mobilize all human forces at our disposal to march to freedom.

But Azaso has only black students as members. Why? It is not because Azaso is racist! Our organisation has been formed, as mentioned, to fight against problems that are common to us. As black students we find that many day-to-day problems are specific to us only - and hence Azaso's membership now. Further we do, when necessary, work together with the National Union of South African Students (Nusas).

We are a student organisation, and our primary site of struggle is education. We, however, know that our demands for a non-racial and democratic education system will never be met in this unjust order. This, therefore, necessitates our constant participation in the broader struggle of our people at all times. It is for this reason that we join the UNITED DEMOCRATIC FRONT and shall continue to participate in all its activities in a quest for a just, non-racial democratic South Africa.

AZASO calls on all of you to make 1985 a year in which our people's dream of concretising our education demands and a dream of a strong united student force shall be accomplished.

## Democracy

The democratic approach means that as a member of Azaso and somebody who participates in its activities, you will contribute to the direction and advancement of Azaso. Your views will be taken into account and you will be encouraged to criticize, elect and discipline your leadership.

Azaso works very closely (principled alliance) with the Congress of South African Students (Cosas). Cosas operates like Azaso does, but at high school level.

Azaso is an affiliate (member) of the United Democratic Front (UDF). The UDF's actions have proven that it unites all the people of South Africa who are genuinely committed to march forward to people's power.



# AZASO CHALLENGE



Azaso students challenge the education system

Our very position as a privileged minority is a challenge to us. To understand and appreciate the challenges facing the black student today we need to take a brief look at the South African political situation and the forces working to maintain it. The South African society is one torn apart by conflict. This conflict is mainly between those who own and control the wealth of the country and those who work and produce it but get nothing out of it except the minimum needed to keep them alive so that they can go to work every day. The conflict, inequality, racial oppression and economic exploitation are maintained by the system of apartheid.

We have seen how over the years the system has struggled to maintain its control of power and wealth through the use of laws and courts, propaganda, co-option of sections of the oppressed people and failing these, naked repression in the form of police force and the SADF.

On the other hand the masses have through their democratic organisations waged a protracted and gallant struggle against all aspects of oppression. Through their trade unions, youth, civic, professional, womens and general political organisations the masses have resisted and launched repeated attacks against the system of apartheid.

As black students it is important that we understand very clearly our position in this ongoing conflict. The challenge is on us to decide whether we are going to stand aloof, be part of the oppressive system or join the oppressed majority in their struggles. There is no room for "neutrality". In fact neutrality is the worst form of partiality. In order to be part of the oppressed, we must turn all privilege granted to us into instruments of strengthening the struggle for democracy. The solution does not lie in individual hard work and spending of sleepless, agonising nights, suffering in silence. The answer lies in our unity so that we can

- 1) Challenge the education system with all its manifestations. Expose the intentions and effects of the system to all our people.
- 2) Fight the overall oppression and exploitation which our people experience in all aspects of life.

The need for unity cannot be expressed in any stronger terms. We must not lay emphasis on our differences because by doing this we will only be doing good service to the enemy. Our unity must be based on those things which we have in common, those things that stem out of our oppression and our common love for freedom and democracy.



# FORWARD WITH ED

The historic Azaso Congress of 1981 came up with important resolutions, one of which was to campaign for an education charter. This document was to contain the education demands of the people of South Africa especially the students. It is important to outline the objectives of the campaign for us to better understand this Education Charter Campaign.

The objectives are as follows:

1. To collect the demands of as many people as possible regarding education, through a process of widespread consultation.
2. To draw up a guideline for a future education system in a democratic South Africa, that will satisfy the needs of all the people.
3. To actively resist and take initiatives against oppression in all spheres of education.
4. To provide a concrete channel for the student grievances arising out of inferior education.
5. To guide student struggles in years to come.
6. To further understanding of the role of education in apartheid South Africa, and of the role of a progressive education system.
7. To build student unity and strengthen the non-racial student alliance.
8. To build and strengthen the organisations involved in the campaign.
9. To reach and mobilize as many sectors of the community as possible around the issue of education (bearing in mind that education affects all sectors of society).
10. To build unity between students and parents, workers, teachers and members of the community.



Azaso uniting students for der

Azaso and Cosas have been campaigning around the Charter for the past 3 years. The campaigning was at a very low level that decisive questions had to be asked as regards for instance the nature of the campaign, the direction, etc. It was then decided to form the Azaso Congress of '84 that the following steps should be followed:

1. That local committees from each Azaso branch be formed to facilitate the running of the campaign at local level.
2. To consult with other local clubs and societies in our campuses for the popularisation of the campaign.
3. To consult and invite other organisations of the people in our communities, on regional basis, to form regional committees for the taking up of the campaign.



# EDUCATION CHARTER



democratic education

To look at the possibility of racial co-ordination.

The charter campaign is being visualized as a continuation of the people's resistance against inferior apartheid education, and as an elaboration to the clause in the people's Freedom Charter "The doors of learning and culture shall be opened". The charter campaign is also our tool to heighten the struggle for a free non-racial democratic education.

1984 has been the year of growing resistance on the part of our people on all fronts. Students took to the streets boycotting the exploitative and racist education system and all its manifestations through puppet representation, age limits, corporal punishments, etc. It was also the year in which the worker-student alliance was proved in practice more

firmly than ever before. That year also marked the total rejection of the Botha-Malan strategies to co-opt and divide our people on race and colour lines ie. African from Coloured and Indian and also African from African (rural and urban). These sites of struggle are important for our education charter campaign for they symbolise the type of struggles our people have waged and still have to wage for the establishment of people's power, because the charter campaign is one of the many campaigns by our people to organise, to mobilise our people and sharpen our weapons of attack against the apartheid system.

This is also important because if we look at the Freedom Charter, we will realise that the Freedom Charter remains a response by the people of South Africa, protesting against the illegal government of this country.

## The People's Charter

The Education Charter Campaign was therefore launched against this background, firstly in the Eastern Cape in September 1984 at Rhodes University. Natal also launched the campaign during the same weekend as the Eastern Cape launch. One of the most successful launches of the campaign was in the Transvaal where more than 2 000 people attended. The regions of the Western Cape, Orange Free State, etc, have still to launch the campaign at the next opportune moments.

One of the achievements of the education campaign so far was the coming together of all progressive student movements of South Africa (Azaso, Nusas, Cosas) in a non-racial united action.

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# Education Charter Declaration

*We, the peace-loving people of South Africa,*

## NOTING:

- that the separate and inferior system of education for the majority of the people of South Africa entrenches inferior and undemocratic ideas
- that the unequal education which students continue to reject further deepens the present crisis
- that the so-called reforms including the de Lange proposals and the White Paper are measures to ensure the continued survival of Apartheid education
- that under this New Constitution Apartheid education will still be felt in our classrooms and the cultural life of our people will still be harmed

## BELIEVING:

- that education must be based on the needs and serve the interests of the people
- that education should be accessible to all regardless of colour, creed, sex or age
- that reforms will not bring about a lasting solution to our problems in education
- that our students struggles arise out of real grievances
- that education is not an issue affecting students alone but all sectors of our society
- that there can never be meaningful change in education until there is meaningful change in society



## THEREFORE PLEDGE:

- to unite as workers, women, youth, students, professionals, sportspeople, and others and fight side by side
- to interlink the struggles in education with the broader struggle for a united, free, democratic and non-racial South Africa
- to engage ourselves actively in a campaign for an Education Charter that will embody the short-term, medium-term and long-term demands for a non-racial, free and compulsory education for all in a united and democratic South Africa based on the will of the people.

## Charter cntd.

It is hoped that the education campaign will be the climax of the youth activities in 1985 around the programmes of the International Youth Year. It is also important to stress here that the reality of the Charter Campaign will be realised through conscious and untiring efforts of our people both active and supportive so that it could be possible to predict that the campaign will fold before the end of this year. Also important is the fact that the campaign will be meaningless if it does not get the full backing it desires from our people especially the students for it is them that must ultimately determine the short term, medium and long terms of the campaign, and whether the majority of the people will know about the campaign.

We need therefore to commit ourselves to this obligation and the highest ideals, to strive sparing neither strength nor courage side by side, shoulder to shoulder, to struggle tirelessly sharpening our offensive until the ideals espoused by Hector Peterson, Emma Sathekge, Bongani Khumalo and you are met in a non-racial democratic South Africa where the people shall govern.

Amandla awethu, matla ke a rona!!!

Forward to democratic SRC's!!!

Forward to the Education Charter Campaign

Forward to a people's education!!

All power to the people!!!



# THE FREEDOM CHARTER

The South Africa of today is the result of the common effort of all its peoples. The cities, industries, mines and agriculture are the fruits of the efforts of all its peoples. But the wealth thus created is used by and for the interests of the white minority only.

From the outset of history of our organised struggle the indigenous masses asserted their right to determine the direction and destiny of their lives and the land.

In the early fifties the liberation struggle was reaching new heights the need was seen for a clear statement of the future South Africa as the people saw it. Thus was born the Congress of the People Campaign. In this campaign the ANC and its allies invited the whole of South Africa to record their demands which would be incorporated in a common document called the Freedom Charter. Literally millions of people participated in the campaign and sent their demands of the kind of South Africa they wished to live in. These demands found final expression in the Freedom Charter.

## Congress

The Freedom Charter was adopted at the Congress of the People representative of all the people of South Africa which met at Kliptown, Johannesburg on 25 and 26 June in 1955.

Three thousand delegates who gathered at Kliptown represented people from all walks of life. There were workers, peasants, intellectuals, women, youth and students of all races and colours. The Congress was the climax of the campaign waged by the African National Congress, the South African Indian Congress, the Coloured Peoples' Organisation, the South African Congress of Trade Unions and the Congress of Democrats.

Thus the Freedom Charter became the common programme enshrining aspirations of all the freedom loving and progressive people of South Africa.

It is now 30 years since the adoption of the Freedom Charter. Throughout the years the Freedom Charter has

served as a beacon and a basis of struggle for the struggling masses of South Africa. Simultaneously the Freedom Charter has remained a threat against the white minority regime. One only has to look at the demands of the Freedom Charter to realise that not a single one of these demands can be met within the framework of apartheid.

## Students

For us students the clause which states that "The doors of learning and culture shall be opened!" is of immediate importance and relevance. One of the biggest crimes of the apartheid regime is the damage it has done to the development of the people of South Africa in the fields of learning and culture. On the one hand the minds of the white people have been poisoned with all forms of unscientific and racialist indoctrination in their separate schools, colleges and universities

To them has been made available all the worst forms of so-called western culture. As far as the black people are concerned the general position is of deprivation and racialistic discrimination all along the line. It is not only that blacks are virtually barred from the cultural productions of mankind, but in addition everything has been done to prevent their developing their own national cultures. The general state is that of a racially motivated ideological education.

It is thus appropriate and our task for all the people of South Africa and students in particular, to mark the 30th anniversary of the Freedom Charter by:

- popularising the Freedom Charter
- organising the masses wherever they are for the attainment of a South Africa based on the Freedom Charter
- intensifying the struggle for a free democratic and non-racial education

Long live the Freedom Charter!



# RELEASE OUR LEADERS

... again the South African Government poses as the prince of peace - but we all know better.

In March last year the Nkomati Accord was signed with Mozambique. But it is not with Mozambique that they need to make peace, but with us. They need to release all our leaders, allow the return of all those in exile, and dismantle apartheid. But no, instead they shoot us, detain us, harass us - 1984 was yet another year of repression.

Then of course, there was the new constitution - "One step in the right direction," they said. They announced that apartheid was to be dismantled pillar by pillar. But no; we see no change. Apartheid is being more firmly entrenched. The wealth of the country is not shared amongst those who work. The doors of learning and culture remain firmly shut. Now we see the rising cost of living as well as the ever increasing control of our lives. Local authorities are to have their own police forces and Coloured and Indian youth are to be conscripted to fight for apartheid.

Today the government presents just another facade; another public relations ploy, a ploy designed to perpetuate the myth of the existence of a reform programme. They have offered to release Mandela - conditionally of course.

Nelson Mandela is a man of great love. A man that stands firmly behind the struggle for freedom and justice. It was for this commitment that he was forced to leave his home and family. Mandela has spent the last 22 years in jail and more than 5 decades in the service of his people. It was only when the government banned the ANC that they turned to armed struggle ... because they believed that the doors of peaceful struggle had been closed. Today the government makes an offer, one that is tantamount to make him go into political limbo. An offer that has been no different from all the rest - a conditional offer.

Mandela has said no to Botha. He says that it is up to the government to denounce violence. It is the apartheid system that is the cause of violence. In fact the apartheid system is inherently violent. We all know the violence of the pass laws, the violence of detention, the violence of the Group Areas Act - the violence of apartheid. It is up to the government to end this violence and not to disguise it in the name of reform.

Long live Mandela!

ALUTA CONTINUA!

# WOMEN UNITE

The Womens' Organisation of AZASO pays tribute to the women of South Africa who have, and still do, struggle relentlessly to overcome oppression and exploitation in all its manifestation. In struggle, women discover and exercise a power which effectively provides them a new identity different from that which society projects. This identity is and can only be a new degree of social power. We believe that the liberation of a people cannot be achieved as long as women are held in bondage.

Generally speaking, women are the most oppressed, humiliated and exploited people in society. It is not possible to get rid of the system of exploitation while keeping one part of the society unorganised. It is imperative for women (students) to start organising one another and to discuss the problems they face as women. Women should be organised and be able to teach one another about basic issues like contraceptives, health problems. They should also discuss how the political, economic and social injustices affect them.

We must mobilise all women so that they feel the need to participate in concrete tasks, to feel responsible and to be actively engaged in the transformation of society into one where dignity, justice and freedom prevails.

The laws such as influx control, the homeland system and the myth that womens' place is in the kitchen contribute in isolating women. This makes it difficult for women to see that their problems can be solved through collective action. Women are oppressed not only as blacks but also as workers. Thus it is necessary to organise women.

Women are invited to join the AZASO Womens' Group.

Tsongang Basadi!

Vukani Makhosikazi!

Women Awake!

AZASO Newsletter is edited by Chris Mokoena and produced by Black Students Society each of 1 Jan Smuts Avenue, Johannesburg. The views and opinions expressed do not to those of the Council or the Students Representative Council of the University of the Witwatersrand.



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