



**WE CAN NO MORE**

**ENDURE**

**THE PAIN**

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**Ellen Musialela**

**DAWN:** Addressing the first Regional Conference of SWAPO Women's Council you called on Namibian women to unite to crush colonialism. What was the significance of that call?

**Ellen:** It is true that I called on all Namibian women to unite to crush and eradicate colonialism in Namibia. In the olden days before the colonisers invaded our country — before the racist regime

came to Namibia, the life of our people was different. We worked together with little difference between our roles in society.

Women were not so much regarded as minors by their husbands. With the advent of colonialism in Namibia, we saw a change — women became victims of domination and exploitation.

That is why it is important for the Namibian women to unite to ensure that the oppressive system in Namibia is destroyed.



**DAWN:** In view of this background, is there any form of resistance by women in Namibia?



There was resistance during the German occupation of our country. Even now, women continue to resist South African occupation. We women are responsible for lives. We bear children. Women are tired of giving birth to slaves. We can no more endure the pain of seeing our children debased into slavery.

Our Women have realized the need to struggle alongside our men in every form of resistance in Namibia. In December 1959 our people marched to the Bantu Commissioner's office in Windhoek in protest against forced removals.

**FOREFRONT**

Women were in the forefront in this protest which was spearheaded by a courageous woman, Kakurukaze Mungunda. She died under a hail of bullets while setting the superintendent's car on fire. Eleven people were killed by the regime, the majority of them being women and children. We were inspired by what Mungunda did and we shall continue to fight against the racist regime alongside our men, until all oppression is completely wiped out from our country.

"We can no more endure the pain of seeing our children debased in to slavery."



**DAWN:** How do women in PLAN contribute towards a free independent Namibia?

Ellen: Women in Namibia were inspired by the defeat of the Portuguese in Mozambique and Angola. They came out in great numbers into one front where they learn that for us women to be free, we have a duty to destroy

the colonial system in Namibia. We explained to them the constitution of SWAPO which bears no discrimination between men and women. It is up to us to show our talents and capabilities through our participation.

SWAPO women can participate in any form of work to advance our struggle.

The role of women in the People's Liberation Army of Namibia is not restricted to any one form. They play many roles as communication, medical, intelligence officers; commissars and commanders of our army.

Some of the women have already engaged the enemy in battle. When the racist regime attacked Cassinga in 1978 two women, Maria Katoko and Ester Naboth manned an anti-aircraft gun defending the camp.

When the racist regime bombed and shelled the camp, these women never gave up. They stood their ground, holding onto the anti-aircraft gun until they were gunned on the spot-fighting. They defended unarmed women, children and old people until the last minute.

Our women are not people who only carry guns and food; but they have to physically participate in active combat.

Women inside Namibia also come out openly in support of the People's Liberation Army of Namibia. Women like Ida Jimmy, addressing a rally, called upon women to actively support our army.

Making this call, she gave an example of her own son, saying if he came back she could not reject him. It is her own child that she gave birth to; she would not regard him as a criminal but as a freedom fighter. She reiterated that it is our duty as women to work with PLAN combatants, because they are our own liberators and not criminals as the racist regime of Pretoria is trying to portray them. Getrude Kandanga, the Deputy Secretary of Swapo Women's Council is another example of resistance by our women in Namibia. Rauna Nambinga was victimised and tortured by racist police for giving shelter to Swapo combatants.



**DAWN:** So what you are saying is that the struggle for women's liberation is very much linked with the struggle against the racist regime.

**Ellen:** Exactly. If we want to be emancipated as women we must first destroy the system which denies us the right to forge ahead and be emancipated as women. The apartheid system divides and separate people. There is no way in which we can work together with our men as equals under that system.

It is difficult for women to confine themselves to sexual discrimination without addressing ourselves to the system which is hindering our development. The constitution of Swapo guarantees the

right of women to equality and all-round participation in the liberation struggle.

We must pay special attention to the development of our women during the liberation process — to give them the all-round education and professional training. If we upgrade and educate our women, then by the time we attain our independence we will be able to have a high number of women in professional and skilled jobs. And it is through our participation in the liberation struggle that we can also help to liberate our men from backward attitudes.



**"SWAPO is giving us a chance, to show that there is a difference between life under the racist colonial regime and what SWAPO stands for and is doing for our people."**

**Ellen:** After Swapo was formed we had a Consultative Congress in 1969 in Tanzania where the Swapo Women's Council was formed. This wing was formed in recognition of the contribution that women have made in the struggle. But, despite the low number of women at that time, the few that were there made their mark. Comrade Putuse Appolus is our representative at the Pan African Women's Organisation in Algeria.

**DAWN: "What is the role of Swapo Women's Council in ensuring that women play their role within the People's Liberation Army of Namibia?"**

Also, another worthy contribution was made by Dr. Libatina Amathila who is still working hard in trying to develop the Health conditions for children and mothers.

We run political classes to deepen our women's consciousness and expose the enemy's divisive tricks against our people. The enemy divides our people because it wants to continue to exploit their labour in the mines and as domestic servants.

Today Swapo women can go and address the United Nations Organisation on behalf of our organisation. This is something which the racist regime could have never dreamt of. They are surprised when they see our women in these forums. The boers instil in us the myth that a black woman is incapable of doing anything.

I was also surprised when I came to Swapo and found women doing everything. The South West Africa People's Organisation is giving us a chance to show that there is difference between life under the racist colonial regime and what Swapo stands for and is doing for our people.

We women have to put more effort and energy in fighting side by side with our men because it is within these conditions created by our organisations that our emancipation will come. At least, now we can see that there is light coming in, whereas in the past we were just left in the darkness to rot.

The struggle continues and victory is certain.

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