

TAXI TALK

What the dictionary forgot

As women, we are raised in a particular culture which shapes our personalities, attitudes and ideas. By culture I mean a way of life. And sexism, of course, is a part of this way of life.

Sexism cuts across colour and nationality. Despite apartheid, sexism is common to both black and white.

While growing up, I learnt to cook, to clean the house, to do the washing and so on, as if it was the most natural thing to do. When I could do all of these things, I was seen as a "real woman". This is what all girls are expected to become.

What I cannot understand is that even some mothers who are members of a women's liberation organisation expect their daughters to fit the mould society has shaped for women.

Our culture as black people, regardless of our language differences, demands that a woman should possess particular qualities in order for her to be seen as a "woman". If you disagree with this view,

"Sexism is the sexual prejudice against women" — this is how a dictionary defines sexism. But it does not say "prejudiced" by whom. This missing information helps us understand sexism, argues Dudu Msomi



you are accused of acting white, even though white women are fighting the same battles.

It is, however, true to say that many white women managed to address this problem to some extent because of the help of domestic workers.

My argument is not that young girls should not be taught to cook. My concern is that only girls — and not boys as well — are taught house-keeping.

As women, we must put forward different views about gender to our children and encourage their natural talents regardless of their sex. Stop giving girls only tea-sets and dolls, and boys only guns and cars to play with.

Children define their roles from a tender age by what we say and do as adults. You should not say this is what girls should do and this is what boys should do. This not only takes women backwards, but society as a whole.

I once told someone: "The day I meet an African man who cooks for me without complaining or feeling something is wrong, I will marry him."

Well, I hope nobody holds me to that, but it is my wish that men and women will change and create a new society and culture of equality and respect. ☺

DOONESBURY

by Garry Trudeau

