

WOMAN'S DAY

SPEAK went to some of the celebrations of this year's National Women's Day in Johannesburg and Durban. We heard the voices, music, dance, plays, poems, and speeches of many South African women. Workers, community activists, church women, students, poets, health workers, women's groups, veterans of the women's struggle, and youth - all added their voices. It was a National Women's Day that raised many issues concerning women and the future.

Women, You Can Make it Happen

At the Natal COSATU Women's Forum rally in Durban, the message was clear - "Women, you can make it happen," said Sister Bernard Ncube, president of the Federation of Transvaal Women (FEDTRAW). "You are the workers. How can your boss tell you what to do when he eats from your own sweat?"

At the same meeting, a shopsteward from the Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers' Union of South Africa (ACTWUSA) told the meeting: "A lot of women take a back seat in the struggle and don't fight for their rights." She said that often men do not allow their women to take part in the struggle. And this allows the bosses to win. She said: "Our men must allow us to participate in the struggle and then the bosses won't win so easily."

And a shopsteward from the Garment and Allied Workers' Union (GAWU) said: "Comrade women - your place is not in the kitchen, your place is in the struggle!"

The Flower Hall in Jo'burg Saw the Women Make the Day

"Maqabane gijima nawe, maqabane gijima nawe, comrades run with us, comrades run with us." This was the loud, excited welcoming song that met Helen Joseph



Photograph by Pax Magwaza, Afrapix

A performer from the play "You Have Struck a Rock" presented at Natal Organisation of Women's August 9 cultural evening in Durban.



Photograph by Jeeva Rajgopaul, Afrapix

Women workers from GAWU present a play about their factory floor struggles.



Photograph by William Matatla, COSATU

when she arrived at the August 9 celebration organised by the Federation of Transvaal Women (FEDTRAW) in Johannesburg.

We Will Unite All Over South Africa

Helen Joseph was one of the women who took the petitions to Strijdom in 1956. She told the story of going to Strijdom's office with all of the petitions that women had signed opposing passes for women. She said that there is still a long struggle ahead. And that strong women had to be strong and united in order to win the struggle. We are not allowed to quote Helen, as she is restricted by the government.

All Women are Health Workers

A speaker from the South African Health Workers' Congress urged women to get involved in community health programmes. She said: "Traditionally our women are health workers, irrespective of health training, because they care for their families, mothers, brothers, fathers and children." She also spoke about the problem of apartheid health. She said: "The government has taken away the yearly pap smear from us. With the pap smear you can prevent cancer of the cervix. As women, we are being overworked in so many ways. We end up having abortions. As health workers, we feel that we must do something about these things." She said: "FEDTRAW and health workers' organisations should make a



Photograph by Anna Ziemiński, Afrapix

Top: Helen Joseph arrives to a comrade's welcome!

Above: Women from Tafelkop in the Northern Transvaal perform at the FEDTRAW rally.

Right: A lively spirit at the Flower Hall!

Photograph by Anna Ziemiński, Afrapix



campaign to bring back from the government those pap smears."

There were stalls with women from different organisations selling food, T-shirts, dresses made by co-operatives, and books and magazines.

Woman and the Future in a Changing South Africa

In Lenasia about 200 women came to a conference called "Women and the Future in a Changing South Africa". There were many talks on different topics given by women.

The Young Lionesses

Women students at Khanya College in Johannesburg organised a challenging celebration of August 9. Women speakers talked about the role of women in the church, in unions, and in organisations. There was poetry reading, and the choir from the South African Domestic Workers' Union. Sister Bernard of FEDTRAW spoke. Jennifer Ferguson sang a tribute to the brave women of South Africa. The Khanya students, young women and men, performed plays about sexual harassment, male domination, and the inequality between men and women in the home. The whole event gave everyone a lot to think about. So we say, Viva the young women, viva! Viva the young lionesses! Freedom in our time!

Stand Up and Make it Happen!

August 9 is not just about celebrating the past. It is also about the future. In the words of Sister Bernard Ncube, the president of the Federation of Transvaal Women (FEDTRAW): "It is for you to stand up. Let's not just remember the stalwarts of the 1950's. Let's remember the stalwarts of '88 and '89. Liberation is set. We can move it. You are the ones. Stand up and make it happen. Stand up and work. Don't just sing songs and slogans. Actions bring about actions to bring about liberation." ●



Photograph by Anna Zieminski

Sister Bernard in a fiery speech. Women, you can do it!



Photograph by Cedric Nunn, Afrapix

SADWU comrades join in at the Khanya College celebration.



Photograph by Cedric Nunn, Afrapix

Hospital workers at the New Johannesburg Hospital are making demands. The workers, who are mostly women, are members of the National Education, Health and Allied Workers' Union. They want the hospital desegregated, decent paid maternity leave, and their union recognised.

A Day of Action

Beating a Sign of Love?

Did you hear about the Zimbabwean senator who said that beating your wife is a sign that you love her, and you only do it to teach her a lesson. If beating is a sign of love, what is a sign of hate? Maybe all these years of beatings that freedom-loving people have had from the apartheid system is a sign of love after all? Funny way of showing love.

May 28 was declared International Women's Health Day of Action in 1988. This day has become a day of action around women's health all over the world. It focuses especially on the problem of women dying from backstreet abortions, and in childbirth.

In Peru, South America, women marched to the main cemetery to remember the thousands of women who have died from childbirth or backstreet abortions. Women then spoke about the situation of women's health, and demands for better health services were made.

In Uruguay, South America, women also took action. Women filled the front, the halls and the entrance of the Pereira Rossel Hospital, the main mother-child health care centre. There they had talks on health and discussed personal stories about women's health problems.

In Johannesburg, South Africa, the Women's Division of the South African Council of Churches took up the day of action by focusing on cancer of the cervix, which kills many women.

Many other countries all over the world took up the "International Women's Health Day of Action". Let's organise for more and more women to focus on women's health. Health is our right!

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