

Being A Writer Does Not Mean You Had To Go To School

Roseline Naapo's Story



Photograph by Anna Zieminski, Afrapix

Roseline Naapo

Roseline Naapo was a domestic worker before becoming an organiser for the South African Domestic Workers' Union (SADWU), a Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) affiliate. Roseline is a poet, and a member of the Congress of South African Writers (COSAW). She spoke at a COSAW conference called "Women and Writing." Here she speaks about how she became a writer.

"We are encouraging domestic workers to write short stories and seeing whether there are some hidden talents within the domestic workers. Because we have seen that to be a writer does not mean you had to go to school. You can say whatever you can say without knowing how to write. The next person will write it for you, and it can be put into a book."

"I am going to speak about how I was inspired to be a writer. I was not born with the knowledge of writing. I was brought up by a stepmother who never showed me love. She bought me beautiful

clothes, toys as a camouflage to society that she loves me. But the house was cold."

"When I started going to school I learnt to have a little notebook to write about whatever problems I had on a particular day. These writings made me compile them into small poems, or plays."

"During my school days the problems became more and more, because I had the gift of being clever, of coming number one in school each year. And my step-mother's children couldn't get the first position. That was another problem for me."

"I started again, writing a play and letting the school children play that play and I would pretend to be my step-mother. I was trying to show the people how I was living in that beautiful house with beautiful clothes, with everything which the people saw was beautiful and a happy life, but with no love."

Roseline became a domestic worker. She said, "In the field of domestic work, it's not happy, it's not nice. You live in a beautiful room which they call a home. But you live alone. You are not allowed to have visitors, you are not able to live with your husband. You are separated from your family for many months. And your employer expects you to smile each morning when you come into her house."

"When the employer leaves she expects you to be a good mother to her kids, a good nurse to her kids. You must be one hundred percent to her kids. Meanwhile you are feeling a clot in your heart that you cannot even kiss your child in the morning when you wake up."

Here is a poem written by Roseline Naapo.

Madam,
remember when I was young
and happy
Remember when I used to
perform
your choruses in time
Remember when I used to run
your errands fast

Today I'm old
I'm no good

Today I'm walking on three legs
I'm no good

Madam
where did my sweat go
Madam
did you ever consider
that today I need you
as you needed me
in the sixteen years
I worked for you

COSAW held a conference called "Buang Basadi/Khulumani Makhosikazi/Women Speak." They produced a book by the same name with speeches and discussion from the conference, as well as poems by COSAW members. This article was taken from the book. The book costs R3.50, and can be ordered from COSAW, P.O. Box 421007. Fordsburg, 2033, Johannesburg●



Photograph by Pax Magwaza, Afrapix

Domestic workers are being encouraged to write stories about their lives.

A Women's Health Journal

Women all over the world are organising around health issues. The Women's Health Journal is produced by Isis International. It aims to share with women how women all over the world are organising around health issues. The journal comes out 6 times a year. It has news, information and articles. It talks about the experiences of women's groups and organisations. It also tells of meetings and conferences that are coming up all around the world. If you would like to find out more about this journal, then write to: Isis International, Casilla 2067, Correo Central, Santiago, Chile, South America.

International Women and Health Meeting in the Phillipines in 1990

There is going to be a big international meeting of women to bring women together to share information, experiences, and to talk about ways of organising around women's health issues. And it will focus on how to strengthen women's organisations. The meeting will be in the Phillipines in 1990. It is the sixth meeting of its kind. If your organisation is interested in attending, then write as soon as possible to: GABRIELA, P.O. Box 4386, Phillipines.

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