

SISA

SPEAK

Vol. 30, 1998



Are women winning the fight? - COSATU women battle for their rights

**Marion Sparg
MK soldier ANC
NEC member**

**Rose Ngwenya
of AZAPO speaks**

**A single father
speaks of his
feelings on
being a father**

**ANC July Conference
and women**

A Clinic in a Yard

1991-09-20
LIBRARY

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SPEAK Comment

This time is a real challenge for women. It is a time to think carefully and creatively about affirmative action and how to put the nice words adopted at conferences into practice.

Both the ANC Conference and the COSATU Congress held in July this year show clearly that comrades in these organisations have not moved very far in terms of acting on their belief that women should see an end to their oppression and exploitation.

Clearly women will have to struggle hard to win this freedom. No oppressed grouping was ever handed its freedom. The challenge to women is to continue the struggle and to take it to new and higher levels. It is a time for women to get off the back seat of the liberation struggle and sit up in front, alongside men in power. Only this way will women be able to take part in the politics of this country. Only in this way will women be able to be part of shaping their destiny.

But this time is also a time of challenge to men comrades who have to show that their words about supporting women's struggles for liberation are not just empty sounds.

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We welcome Libby Lloyd who joins SPEAK as writer/sub-editor.

We wish Karen Hurt well during her leave from SPEAK.

SPEAK's Durban office will be closed from December 1991.

Our Johannesburg office address is: Office 7, 17 Floor Conlyn House, 156 President Street, Johannesburg 2001. Telephone 011-296166.

Letters

READERS SPEAK OUT

Some questions

Dear SPEAK

Thank you for a useful, easily affordable magazine. I have three questions:

- 1 Can anyone use the articles you publish? How do we avoid getting into trouble because of the copyright?
- 2 If I wish to sell SPEAK in my area how do I go about it?
- 3 If one has written poetry how does one get it published?

Yours faithfully
Nicolette Smith

Durban

Dear Nicolette,

Thanks for your questions. In answer to them:

1 If a person wants to use articles from SPEAK they can do so but they must state that the article comes from SPEAK magazine in South Africa.

2 We have commissioned rates for selling SPEAK in bulk. A copy of our rates is on page 35.

3 Here are some organisations to contact for more information about publishing poetry:

Congress of South African Writers (COSAW),

PO Box 421007, Fordsburg, 2033, Johannesburg

Phone (011) 8332530;

Skotaville Publishers,

PO Box 32483, Braamfontein, 2001, Johannesburg

Phone (011) 3391871;

Buchu Books, PO Box 2580, Cape Town, 8000. Phone (021) 453786

Thanks to all our readers who have written in. There's so much to talk about in our country right now - so pick up your pens and send your letters to :P.O. Box 45213 Mayfair 2108.

Phambili SPEAK

Dear SPEAK

I'm very pleased for this magazine. I say phambili with it.

I'm a boy who wants to call all women to join women who are fighting for freedom.

I'm not a worker. But I try to organise the women to other women. People of South Africa must wake up until apartheid is removed by the roots. Women must join before the time is gone. Even the girls must join their mothers in the struggle to improve South Africa.

Women must struggle until they attain their rights. Structures through which this problem can be tackled must be formed country-wide in order to discuss this problem of the oppression of women.

Viva MK viva

Viva education for people's future

Viva our demands viva

Yours faithfully

David Nkadimeng "Pirate"

Sekhukhune

Even men must see to it

Dear SPEAK

I'm a 17 year-old student old doing Std 10 at Mthimkhulu High School. I got into this issue of SPEAK. I found it marvellous for information about women who are deadly oppressed in this country.

Women are pulling hard due to family, social and labour problems. This must be saved by both men and women. **EVEN MEN MUST SEE TO IT** that the nation is built up by males and females.

This means that SPEAK is very important for both sexes. This is like when one pretends to do washing using only one hand. It is going to take him or her many hours so, he or she must use both hands.

Men and women must work the same to achieve a democratic, non-racist and non-sexist South Africa. Both men and women must join hands together as one!

Letters continued

As a matric student I wish to make it at the end of the year. I'm requesting you to rush me a list of addresses where to apply for bursaries. I think other readers need them. It will be wise if you do me a favour and publish some in the SPEAK to help others. Thanks a lot to SPEAK and all readers in struggle. I love you SPEAK. Yours in struggle

**Dumisani Moses Khosa
Giyani**

*Dear Dumisani
Thanks for your words of praise. Readers wanting information about bursaries should write to: Education Information Centre (EIC), P O Box 62270, Marshalltown, 2107, Johannesburg with details of the type of course s/he wishes to study. EIC will then pass on the application to a relevant organisation. EIC's telephone number is (011) 834 7861.*

The days of sexism are numbered

Dear SPEAK
The days of women's exploitation and oppression are numbered. It is true that women are without rights today. While women suffer from exploitation and oppression the Nationalist regime is sitting back and doing nothing positive. Instead the illegal regime and the formations of apartheid are working a 24-hour shift to instil fear among women. They want to see women's exploitation and oppression remain in place. We must join hands to address issues like:

- * women and leadership
- * abortion laws in South Africa
- * violence

Women must stand up and voice their grievances like oppression, tradition, principles and exploitation. Women's place is not in

the kitchen or in the back seat of our struggle.

The illegal regime, death forces, askaris, Renamo, Koevoet are apartheid formations and will not detract or delay the transformation process for a just South Africa.

It is true that during the process of transformation the enemy of democracy will always ferment violence. The question of what kind of regime to expect is now irrelevant since the 48th ANC Conference provided us with the solution.

The sun for a democratic, non-sexist and non-racial South Africa has dawned. Our unity is more important than our division. Every woman to the Women's League.

Amandla!

Morgan Gomati

Meadowlands

We shortened Morgan's letter.

IT'S A STRANGE WORLD

ISN'T IT!



JOKES ASIDE

★**Marika de Klerk**, who is married to President FW de Klerk recently went on an overseas trip. A reporter from The Courier newspaper in Vienna said: "It is obvious that she is taking part in the political task of her husband."

Ms de Klerk is said to have told The Courier: "I supported my husband actively in his first election campaign for Parliament. Now I am a member of his team. I address the women - black, white and brown."

Nice work, Marika. Perhaps it would be even nicer if you were democratically voted into this role by the women of this country - black, white and brown? A marriage certificate is very different to a ballot paper.



★**Oops!** A newly elected chairperson of a Transvaal ANC branch made a bit of a mistake the other day. Some children were making a noise during the meeting. "Will the mothers of these children kindly keep them quiet!" he shouted.

Up jumped an angry mother. "These children have fathers

here too, you know. And until the ANC executive arranges creches there will be children making a noise at these meetings!"

Point taken. "Will the new executive please note that creches must be arranged for these meetings," said comrade chair. But was the whole point taken? Fathers of the children did quickly rush up to see to their children. Let's hope they do it at home as well. Let's hope comrade chair does too.

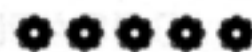


★**Later** at the same meeting women raised the following proposal: at least one of the two delegates to be elected to national conference must be a woman. One well-known male comrade was seen to raise his hand in protest. But this arm was grabbed down by his buddy. "Don't!" hissed his friend, "The women will mess you up!"

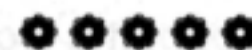


★**Oh dear**, it seems as if some of the hot debate around women's

emancipation did not reach the newsroom of the ANC's conference newspaper. 'Oliver Tambo, National Chairman' says the caption to his photo. Come on, comrades, get your non-sexist dictionaries out.



★**A progressive newspaper** recently had this heading to their story about the COSATU Congress: 'COSATU woos working girls'. We wonder whether they would have the same kind of heading for an article about building support from male workers? 'COSATU woos working boys' sounds a bit stupid, doesn't it? Progressive papers are good on non-racism and democracy, but still have far to go with fighting their own sexist attitudes.



★**"Liberation** is not a struggle against men, but a fight to be able to struggle side by side with them." - From the book 'Slave of Slaves'.

The COSATU Congress held in July 1991 had heated debate on the issue of organising women. Shamim Meer reports.

Are women winning the fight?

COSATU women battle for their rights

Women in COSATU saw clearly before the conference that they would have to fight hard in order to win their demands. Besides making statements about women's oppression COSATU has done little to put words into action. Women have had to fight hard for their right to organise in women's forums. Some unions have opposed this. Women have had to fight hard to get money for organising women. Last year (1990) a post was created for a women's co-ordinator who would play a role in organising women. Up to now it has been no one's job to do this. Women who are already burdened with many loads - of job, home and union activity - have taken on the job of setting up women's forums. The women's fight seemed to be going forward when COSATU agreed to appoint a women's co-ordinator. Women waited eagerly for this job to be filled. But within months of the job being advertised and before anyone was employed COSATU changed its position and there was no job.

This was one of the battles

the women brought to Congress in July 1991. They were convinced that what they needed to further women's struggles in the unions was a co-ordinator. A second battle fought at Congress was the right for women to organise in women's forums. Some unions wanted to propose that there should be an end to women's forums. Women in COSATU were clear they needed these forums and that they would fight for them.

A third issue brought to congress by the Chemical Workers Industrial Union was that one of the 6 people of the national office bearers committee should be a woman. This committee is made up of the COSATU President, two Vice Presidents General Secretary, Assistant Secretary and Treasurer.. Before the Congress the women in COSATU decided they would not push for this resolution, and the results of elections at the Congress was yet again a national leadership made up of men.

We spoke to two of the women who have spearheaded the fight for women's rights within COSATU - Rafiloe Ndzuta and Maggie Magubane of the Wits Women's Sub-committee and the National Women's Sub-committee. Rafiloe told us how these subcommittees

saw the struggle before the Congress and how they planned to make sure they would win their fight. Rafiloe told us why the women had decided not to push for a woman on the national office bearers committee. She said: "We wanted Congress to note this resolution and to note that elections are very imbalanced. Women are 36% of COSATU's membership but we don't have a single woman in national leadership. At a workshop before the Congress the women felt we had women we could put forward. But we felt before we put a woman forward we must groom a person, work with affiliates themselves and make sure this person has the support of women. We felt if we put a woman up now she would not have the support of women in the meetings she would attend. All national meetings are attended by men only. These same men who have been oppressing us for all these years would be looking at her. We felt we must work hard as women so that we can support a person we put forward.

"Women made preparations before the Congress. We held workshops at regional level and in union's women's forums. We looked at how to make women's committees stronger and we looked at

affirmative action as a way of overcoming past imbalances."

After much discussion the Congress said it was committed to affirmative action. Congress decided that COSATU would continue to fight against all forms of discrimination and for full equality for women at the workplace, the unions, in COSATU, and in society.

They agreed to promote participation of women workers and women leadership. They agreed to campaign for parental rights, maternity and paternity leave, childcare and safe transport for workers doing nightwork. They agreed to campaign around health issues like cancer of the cervix, aids and working conditions of pregnant women. They agreed to provide childcare facilities to allow women to take part in union activities; to increase skills and confidence of women shop stewards; and to fight sexual harassment.

On women's forums, which seemed threatened, the Congress agreed to continue building women's forums.

On the co-ordinator Congress decided to employ a full time co-ordinator to *research local and international experiences of women workers, * facilitate discussion and debate on this within unions in COSATU, *ensure women's resolutions are put into action, *check on



women comrades. COSATU talks about a socialist economy. But when you sit down and look, COSATU has not done anything about this. They talk about male workers in a new South Africa. They don't talk about sharing the wealth of the country with women."

Maggie felt the women had won gains. But at the same time she saw problems ahead. Not all unions in COSATU supported the women's struggle. And it was a problem that the co-ordinator's job was only definite

for a year. She said: "These resolutions will take us a step forward. As women we must push our issues through the women's forums. We must assist the co-ordinator because there's a lot to be done by that person. It's true some people are put off from applying because it is a definite post for only a year. We must push as women because a year is too little. It's just enough time for the coordinator to make a start. We must motivate further. "Women must make sure we are a part of assessing the co-ordinator's post with the COSATU CEC. Women must do a lot of pushing. Not all unions in COSATU are pushing women's rights. We can expect some affiliates to come up with problems." Women in COSATU are determined to turn COSATU's words into action. ♣

affirmative action *assist with research , *liaise with forums in affiliates and COSATU. Congress agreed to allocate funds so that the gender co-ordinator could perform these tasks. Progress with the work of the co-ordinator would be assessed by the CEC after one year and they would then decide whether this post would continue.

We asked Maggie Magubane what she thought of these decisions. Maggie told us that this was a step forward in a situation where women have been largely ignored by COSATU. She said:

"This is a step forward for us women at COSATU. The launching Congress adopted women's resolutions. People talked but when it came to action they did nothing. Especially male comrades and even officials ignored the

for a year. She said: "These resolutions will take us a step forward. As women we must push our issues through the women's forums. We must assist the co-ordinator because there's a lot to be done by that person. It's true some people are put off from applying because it is a definite post for only a year. We must push as women because a year is too little. It's just enough time for the coordinator to make a start. We must motivate further.

"Women must make sure we are a part of assessing the co-ordinator's post with the COSATU CEC. Women must do a lot of pushing. Not all unions in COSATU are pushing women's rights. We can expect some affiliates to come up with problems." Women in COSATU are determined to turn COSATU's words into action. ♣

A Clinic in a Yard

Photos - Bobby Rodwell

Sister Mary Agnes - standing right- and the women who run the clinic



The story of a women's clinic called Takalani

Nursing sister Mary Agnes Khunoana believes it is a woman's basic human right to give birth in a place that is warm and safe. She decided if the government was not going to provide this, she was! Bobby Rodwell reports.

When Mary Agnes spoke to people in her community about her plan to open a maternity clinic for women they said: "This one must be dreaming." Takalani Clinic in Khuma township in the Western Transvaal stands today as

proof of her ability to make her dream come true. The clinic is well-named. 'Takalani' means joy. Workshops and clinics on childminding and breastfeeding, among other things, are held. The clinic was built in Mary

Agnus' yard. A double garage and two small rooms have been turned into a brightly painted and sunny clinic where women can feel safe and comfortable. There are seven beds in two wards with cribs for the babies, a delivery room, an examination room and a place where the patient waits to be seen.

Takalani has two trained professional nurses, Mary Agnes and her sister, Martha Khunoana, who train five trainee nurses. They told me that the clinic is open 24 hours a day. In the one month since the clinic opened, four women have given birth in it and they have seen 28 ANC patients.

No, this is not a political patients clinic. ANC means 'Ante Natal Care' which means the medical check-ups pregnant women should go for.

Khuma township is in a mining area. When the Influx Control Laws were scrapped in 1986 it meant women could at last join their husbands or boyfriends. This meant there was a growing need for decent maternity

services. But there was none to be found.

Mary Agnus said: "There are no decent facilities for women to give birth in this area. There is a provincial hospital, Tsepong, in Klerksdorp that is so overcrowded that women who have just given birth often have to share a bed.

"There is only one mine hospital in Vaal Reefs that accepts family members of mine workers. And they have only six beds in the maternity ward! There is a maternity service at the Khuma Clinic but no ambulance service for Khuma. It's a very bad situation. Of course hospital services are open now but we are in CP (Conservative Party) country here. Black people simply do not go to white hospitals.

"Many women had babies at home, in many cases a

shack shared with other families.

"These home births often resulted in death - either the baby or both mother and child. We heard many such stories and I saw it myself.

"The final blow came when the Tsepong Hospital refused to treat patients from out of town. The Vaal Reefs hospital was the only one left and they would only treat patients on the Mines Medical Aid.

"An important inspiration for me was Eva Modise who operated a clinic from her four roomhouse in Soweto," said Mary Agnus. "Her family lived in three small rooms and the fourth one was turned into a clinic. She did this even though her husband was in exile and the times were hard."

When Mary Agnus tried to raise money she found that no-one would take her

seriously so she started saving her own money. After a few years she was ready to make a start. She got some support from local Stilfontein businessmen, but most of the costs she has paid for out of her own money. She felt it would be better to start the clinic and then try to find funding for it.

Mary Agnus spoke proudly of her clinic. She showed photographs of the four babies born at the clinic and spoke about the visits she and the other nurses make to the mothers and babies. This is the Post Natal Care programme.

Mary Agnus gave up a secure job as a professional nurse at the Vaal Reefs Hospital and risked all her money to open Takalani. Why?

"It's simple," said Mary Agnus. "There was a need and I could help. I am a nurse and what's more I am trained as a community nurse. How could I ignore the needs of women in my own community?"

Mary Agnus believes women should push ahead strongly to achieve a better life. She ended off by saying: "Women should know how strong they are and try by all means to achieve their dreams. You saw the number of women at the workshop today. A few years ago they would not have come to discuss their problems together. We must all work together and we can start to make a better life for women in South Africa." ❁

Staff at the clinic help women prepare for giving birth



How can women make sure they are represented in a liberation movement that says it is committed to non-sexism as well as non-racialism and democracy? The ANC Women's League tried one way at the ANC's July Conference in Durban. SPEAK's Karen Hurt writes about it.

The struggle continues- ANC Conference July 1991.

July 1991 was hot in Durban. Sizzling hot. It wasn't even summer. In fact, it wasn't the weather at all. It was the heated and sometimes confused debate around the ANC Women's League proposal on women and leadership. The proposal was that the ANC constitution should put affirmative action into practice by saying that at least 30% of the positions on the ANC National Executive Committee (NEC) be filled by women.

Whether this should be accepted was the longest, most heated debate of the conference. It was unfortunate that the president of the ANC Women's League, Getrude Shope, apologised to conference the following day for taking up so much time on this proposal. After all, women should not have to apologise for fighting their oppression.

Anyone who can do a bit of arithmetic would say that at least 30% representation of women sounds little seeing that women make up 52% of South Africa's population. But no women were elected among the six national ANC office bearers. And there are only nine women out of the 50 other elected members on the ANC NEC. This makes 16% representation by women on the ANC NEC. This is a small improvement on the old NEC where only three out of 35 positions were filled by women.

Not everybody agrees that the women's 30%

proposal is the right strategy to put affirmative action for women into practice. In fact, not all ANC Women's League members as individuals support it. After all, you can get women voted into power who don't fight women's oppression and exploitation. Britain's Maggie Thatcher is a good example of a woman in power who was useless in this way (as well as in other ways).

Perhaps the most important thing about the 30% proposal at conference was what it produced. It produced fine examples of sexist attitudes within the liberation movement. It showed that women have to prepare, educate and organise at a grass roots level to pull off this kind of proposal. And it proved that even when you are promised support from senior leadership, it doesn't mean you'll get it. ANC women found this out the hard way.

Delegates who stood up to speak said some interesting things. One respected male delegate said that having a 30% clause in the constitution would set a precedent for 'minority rights'. It's not hard to believe that many looked at him in shock. After all, you can't really call women, who make up 52% of the population a 'minority group'. In anyone's language women are in the majority.

Others said that the 30% proposal should be in ANC policy and not in the constitution.

Other delegates said that women are 'not



Photo: Dynamic Images

ready' to lead; that there aren't enough women of 'leadership quality' to be voted for; that women must 'prove' themselves. Well, this argument should sound familiar to black people in this country. After all, isn't this the argument whites have used all these years to cling onto their power?

Standing firm

Baleka Kgositsile, Secretary-General of the ANC Women's League stands firm on their proposal. She felt the conference was swayed by the respected delegate who spoke against the proposal.

She said although a lot of men stood up to support the 30% proposal there were some "disgusting" inputs. Like one man who said maybe women can have 1% representation this conference and 10% next conference and so on.

On the other hand, an elderly male delegate

from the Cape stood up and said: "What is this 30%? Women make up more than half of South Africa, it should be more than 30%".

Joe Slovo, who was chairing the session, wanted to put the proposal to the vote. Voting had begun by show of hands when the Women's League announced they were not going to take part in the voting.

Baleka says they did this for three reasons. Firstly, they saw their proposal as putting affirmative action for women into practice. The December 1990 ANC consultative conference had already committed itself to affirmative action. Therefore the Women's League believed this was not an issue to be voted on.

Secondly, they saw this as a fundamental political issue. Baleka said they want people to be educated about what affirmative action means in order to get full and informed support for the proposal.

Thirdly, and because of all this, they were

worried that if they lost the vote, they felt it would be like losing the vote for affirmative action.

Did they make a mistake?

Did the Women's League make a mistake by stopping the voting? Many delegates believe the women would have won the vote. By the time the Women's League had made it known that they were not taking part, counting of hands had already started. Pallo Jordan told Baleka he thought the women should have stuck it out - after all there were apparently only 820 of the 2244 who wanted the sentence, guaranteeing women 30% of leadership positions, taken out of the new constitution.

Baleka said it was obvious that they didn't want just any women in leadership positions. They wanted delegates to look particularly at women with leadership skills. She says: "Affirmative action does not mean tokenism. Affirmative action goes along with quality.

"I felt disappointed with the old NEC. As leadership, without forcing delegates to adopt any particular position, they should have made their position clear. People were agitated and emotional - it was not a voting matter. The ANC consultative conference in 1990 had made a commitment to affirmative action for women.

"At the same time the NEC got worried during the debate. After all, there were rumours that the women were going to stage a walk-out and talk to the press. The women were very clearly very angry.

"There was good reason to feel angry," said Baleka, "they felt the NEC had abandoned them."

Baleka believes affirmative action for women and for black people in this country is important. She said: "Affirmative action is a way of trying to do something about the inequalities of the past.



For people who have been historically pushed down there is a need to work out ways of reversing the effects of oppression. For example, the fact that women are under-represented in most areas of life, except those traditionally regarded as women's roles, must be addressed."

After the debate the ANC Women's League made a statement saying they had not shifted from their principle. They felt they had not done enough work in regional and branch structures. This they are committed to doing.

They also don't believe they failed. Baleka said: "It was a good debate - never before has the ANC had this amount of debate on women's emancipation. But the way forward is to work with the ANC's Department of Political



Above : Women vote for 30% Photo: Dynamic Images
Top left : Baleka Kgositsile addresses the conference
Bottom left: Conference in session. Women who are 53%
of the population made up only 14% of the delegates at
conference Photos: ANC DIP

Education; to work together with the ANC on more debate throughout the movement.

Baleka believes they have started the ball rolling. The Women's League wants women and men addressing sexist attitudes and practices. They want the ANC to set up a national commission on emancipation of women. "This commission was agreed on by the ANC women's conference in Angola in 1987," said Baleka. "Later the NEC of the ANC also committed itself to it. But they never got round to setting it up. This national commission must be formed urgently. It will then monitor progress of the promotion of women in the movement and report regularly to the NEC. It will not be an ANC Women's League commission. It will come up with national programmes which will have to be put into action. And yes, men would sit on the commission."

Why such an emotional issue

Why does the issue of women's emancipation cause such emotion? Baleka says: "Men are used to traditional comforts as men. Men don't realise they don't have to fear that women's emancipation always needs to bring conflict in the house. This does not mean women will start refusing to do everything. It means men must be open to doing household chores so women can participate in more activities."

Many people feel the Women's League was not well prepared for the debate, and that there was a lot of chaos and confusion which could have been avoided. Some felt the national leadership of the ANC Women's League did not give guidance or leadership on this issue. They failed to come up with another strategy to ensure affirmative action when it seemed the 30% proposal may not win.

Baleka feels they learned a lot from what happened at the conference. She agrees they need to plan better in future so as to have clear strategies. She says there's lots of work ahead.

"Now we've got the future looking at us. We must plan workshops. Besides workshops in our ranks we have to put pressure on the national leadership to make sure the new constitution of South Africa reflects how women's emancipation will be ensured.

"This is where ANC Women's League's campaign for a charter for women's rights comes in. It will be launched on 12 October in Welkom."

The biggest question this debate at conference raised seems to be: how can the words 'affirmative action' be put into real practice? And how can women ensure that this issue is placed very high on the agenda of a male-dominated liberation movement that is committed to non-sexism as well as non-racialism and democracy? The challenge to find more concrete and creative ways of achieving affirmative action lies ahead. ♣

Working things out for the best

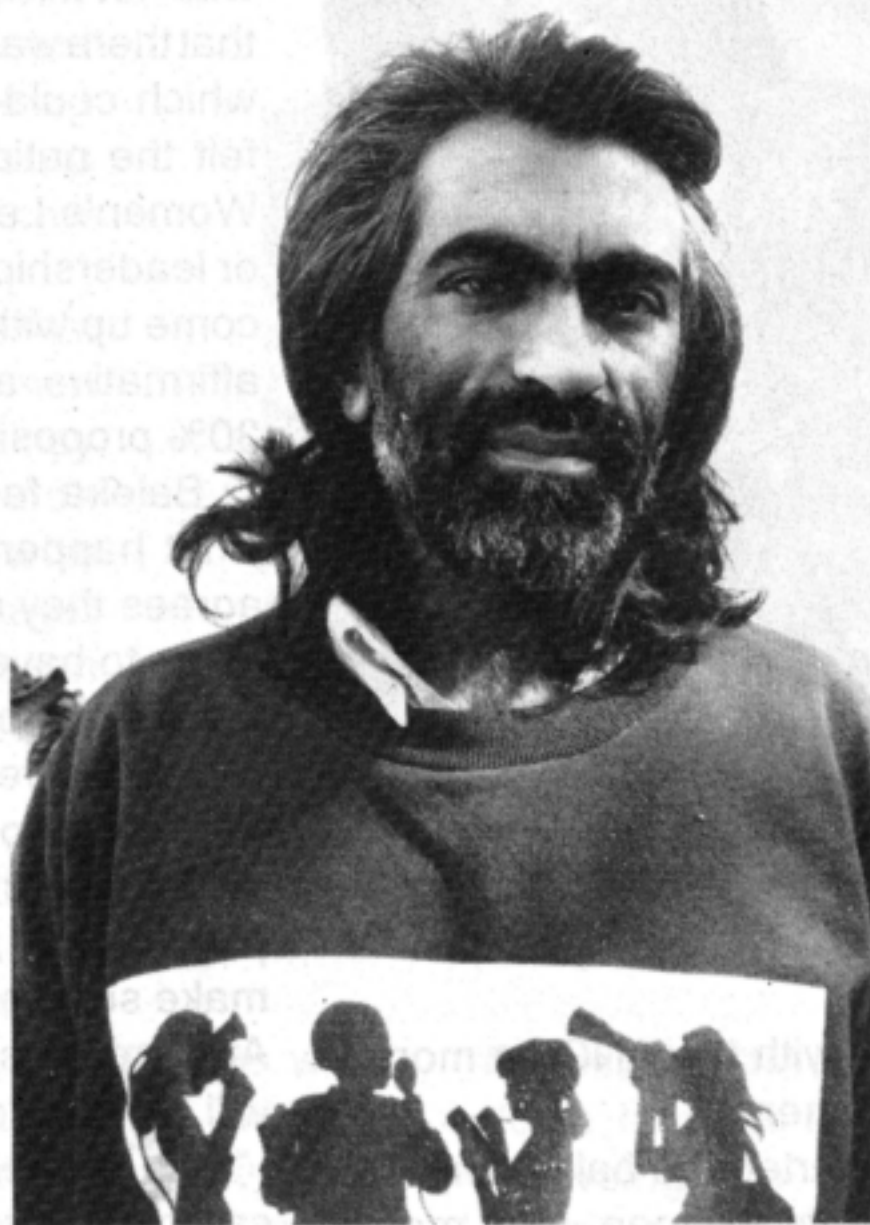
Babs Abba Omar is a thirty-five year old father. He lives in Johannesburg where he works as a journalist. His daughter, Sabina, is two years old. He doesn't live with Sabina or Tracy, the mother of his child. SPEAK asked him to write about his experiences of being a father in this situation. We also asked Tracy to talk from her side. Photo: Karen Hurt, SPEAK.

Tracy and I had been going out for about six months when she fell pregnant. After a lot of discussion we decided to get married. This was because the principal at the school where she taught told her she could be fired by the Transvaal Education Department for being unmarried and pregnant. I was going overseas and could not support Tracy. She needed to keep her job. We got married because of this.

We spoke about abortion but Tracy was against it. I believe the last word on abortion should be left to the woman herself. So I accepted responsibility for Sabina - after all it takes two to tango.

I lived with Tracy for two months after Sabina was born, but then I wasn't happy. I had decided that I did not want to spend the rest of my life with Tracy. After all it was a marriage of convenience and she wanted to have a child more than I did.

But I'm afraid that's easier said than done! Tracy and



Sabina have become a real part of my life - married to me if you want to put it that way. I love my daughter more than anybody in the world.

Because I work from 3pm to 10pm, I can see Sabina daily if I want to. But I see her every other day when Tracy drops her off at my place. We spend Sundays as a family. The childminder, Maria Mtetwa,

takes care of Sabina on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays. But it is not a strict arrangement. I sometimes pick her up from Maria or Tracy if I want to see Sabina. I try to arrange this before I pick her up.

And if Sabina wants to see me? I try to put off whatever I'm doing to be able to see her straightaway. If I can't, I try to see her as soon as possible. And yes, I do change nappies, bathe and feed my child. We go for walks in the neighbourhood or park, play games, draw on paper with pen and crayons, read and listen to music. Among Sabina's favourites are Nina Simone's first record as well as Mango Groove's first one.

I don't babysit my daughter. I care for her. Once a woman who recognised Sabina as Tracy's daughter asked me whether I was baby-sitting. This question really made me pissed off. The woman, who also happens to be a single mother was taken aback when I replied: "I am taking care of

her. I don't babysit my daughter."

This made me ask myself whether men in my situation really care or do they just become baby-sitters? Or whether that woman was talking from her own experience of men?

The time I spend with Sabina is special time. I don't think many fathers spend as much time with their children. But then, fathers living with their children would not put their children through the pain and problems of having their parents living apart. On the other hand, I have made sure that Sabina does not go through the pain and problems that would have happened if I had stayed with Tracy.

The things I miss most when Sabina is not around is being woken up by her pulling my beard, hair or ears and then crawling all over my face, and the sweet things she says into my ears.

Sabina has forced me to be more responsible - there's nothing worse than facing a little dynamo after a heavy night's partying. Also, I have become much more responsible with money because there are Sabina's long term and short term needs to be thought about - clothes, food, medical expenses, education and everything.

When her mother fetches Sabina from me we usually have lunch together. We discuss the changes Sabina is going through - the tantrums, teething and so on. The discussions are important

because they help us decide together how we want to bring up our child. We discuss simple things like how many sweets, choccies and chips she is allowed to eat. And whether we allow her to climb the burglar gates, help her to do this or put the fear of hell into her when she does. I am not into this whole thing of letting her do as she pleases. We allow her to do as she wishes unless it is bad for her or someone else.

Sabina is still being breastfed. I think it would have been a bit easier if men could breastfeed their children. Then Sabina could stay with me when Tracy needed to rest or wanted to go out.

I don't regret being a father. But I would have liked to have been one when I felt it was the right time for me. It puts certain strains on me as well as on Tracy and Sabina.

Two months after Tracy and I separated I began another relationship. Moving from a 'family' situation to a lover and back again meant my time was being divided one more way. You can imagine how much pressure that put upon me.

I began to get tense, irritable and very tired. The time with Sabina was beginning to lack quality. It was becoming another chore. And children are the first ones to notice the changes no matter how one tries to hide it. She did not respond to me that well and often did not want to be left with me.

Tracy was disappointed about my relationship with the other woman. She had hoped

that we could live together at some point. Also at that time she did not want any woman I was involved with to have anything to do with the way we brought up Sabina.

Tracy hopes to go out more often so that we set up a routine. One of the difficult things single mothers have is having relationships with other men. I am not sure how I would feel and I hate to think about how Sabina would feel. I don't hold any bad feelings against Tracy. But being separated and having a child forces me to think carefully about any big move I make and how it would affect the three of us.

I have been thinking of going to university full time for three years. It's taking a lot of planning, thought and discussion. Tracy has been very supportive.

I think it is best to have children with somebody you believe you are going to have a long term relationship with. Because if one decides to separate when the kids are grown up, it is much easier and less painful. But then again you never know what is going to happen in life.

We asked Tracy what she felt. She said her life has not been easy but in time it has got a lot better. In fact, she says, each day seems to bring more joy and happiness.

She said: "Most important to me is this: I love Sabina with my whole being. She has made my life rich and full of meaning: without her, my life



would be unthinkable.

"My pregnancy was the crisis in the relationship between Babs and I. He did not want to be a father. I begged and pleaded with him because I felt great fear for myself and my baby. But when she was born, I felt the deepest happiness and I knew I could give her everything within my power. So when Babs moved out and when he started another relationship when Sabina was four months old, I wondered whether it was worth having him around at all.

"Yet I always felt that he was a good man and I was clear that I wanted Sabina to have a father.

"We have worked hard, both of us, to build our particular family. Babs has grown a lot. He has become strong and now takes on his fatherhood with joy and sensitivity. He is a loving father and I am deeply grateful for this - so many, many fathers are not loving and caring. Babs and I are at peace with each other and we both try to work as parents together. Of course there are many issues that we still need to deal with. I am sure that we will try to deal with them in a positive manner so that our Sabina can always have two loving parents." ☆

SPEAK

Militant women workers of the Philippines

Cloefe Zapanta is the Secretary General of the KMK, the militant women workers movement in the Philippines. Karen Hurt of SPEAK met Cloefe during a visit to the Philippines in November 1990. She asked Cloefe about this movement.

Kilusan ng Manggagawang Kababaihan (KMK) is the name of the women workers movement in the Philippines. It organises working class women both inside and outside the trade union movement.

KMK was formed in 1984 and is made up of local, regional and national structures. At a local factory level women workers organise in chapters. Ten women workers in a factory can set up a chapter of KMK.

KMK works closely with the militant trade union movement Kilusang Mayo Uno (KMU), also known as May First Movement. KMU is a trade union federation very much like Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) in that it fights for both political and economic rights of workers. And like in COSATU, it is mostly men in leadership positions in KMU. Most members of KMK are also members of KMU.

SPEAK: Could you talk about some of the ways in which women workers are exploited in the Philippines?

Cloefe: In Shoe Mart, which is a big chain store, when a woman worker applies for a job she can't wear pants. She must wear a skirt. Some women workers say that when management interviewed them they were asked to raise their skirts. You are not allowed to wear a half-slip because they say maybe the sales clerk is hiding something. After organising the union, we were able to change things.

Women workers get urinary tract infections because they are not allowed to go to the toilet when they need to. The bosses say you are stealing management's time. When you are pregnant you need to go to the toilet more often. The security guards record the time taken at the toilet. The bosses tell you when you can go. You have to reach a production quota. If you go to the toilet, maybe you won't reach that quota. The unions are trying to take up this issue.



The Philippines is made up of thousands of islands, some big and some small. It is a country that faces many natural disasters, like earthquakes, typhoons and volcanoes. Like South Africa, the Philippines is a country of great poverty and unemployment. A country of struggle where working class women are the most exploited of all.

The bosses encourage women workers to use contraceptives because they don't want them to fall pregnant. But they don't offer education for women about the different forms of contraception. There is discrimination against married women. Bosses say in the job application form that women must be single. They don't want married women because they have children. The law says pregnant women should not be fired. If you get pregnant the bosses put pressure on you to resign. Some women do give in to pressure. Especially women who are not active in the trade union or not educated in their rights as workers and as women.

SPEAK: Why organise a movement of only working class women?

Cloefe: Working class women, we believe, have separate problems and women are suffering from gender oppression. Only by organising women workers separately can women be liberated. Although there are unions, women's issues are not taken up. KMK makes sure that women's issues are taken up by the unions.

SPEAK: What is the relationship between KMK and KMU?

Cloefe: KMK is an affiliate of KMU. I am National Commissioner on Women's Affairs in KMU. KMK believes their role is to pressurize the unions to take up women's issues more

seriously. KMU unions consult with KMK on how to take up women workers' issues with management. KMU now has a Women's Commission which works with us. But it wasn't always like this. The problem was their attitude towards women's issues. Men in unions would joke about women's issues. But then women from KMK made a formal criticism by letter about their attitude, and that made a difference. Now we get men joining our rallies.

SPEAK: How does KMK influence KMU?

Cloefe: We talk to union officials and explain the demands. During our first years they didn't feel that it was a priority of trade unions. With the help of organising work and setting up the organisation we made them understand that it is very necessary to take up the issues of women workers. We still need time and effort for men to understand that maternity issues are as important as wage issues. Slowly the situation is improving. It is improving because of our work.

By running education and training workshops KMK ensures women workers develop skills, like leadership, public speaking, and confidence - not only around women's demands but around all working class demands and national issues. Workers are the leading force in changing society. KMK exists to make sure women workers take their rightful place next to men workers as a force for change.☺



Women On The Move



Photo above: SADWU (South African Domestic Workers Union) members held human chain demonstrations all over South Africa to demand that domestic workers must be protected by law. Photo :Karen Hurt of SPEAK

Photo top left: Members of COSATU Johannesburg Women's Forum proudly show off the banner they made which says loud and clear that they are serious about fighting for women's rights. Photo: Karen Hurt of SPEAK

Photo opposite: The Nurses Forum with NEHAWU (National Education Health and Allied Workers' Union) held a meeting of nurses in June 1991 to discuss unionism among nurses. Kumbu of NEHAWU said: "This is a new thing for nurses Some are still reluctant to join a trade union because they believe it is an offence. This is not true. NEHAWU is trying to set up local sub-committees for nurses interested in joining a union." Nurses who are interested to find out more can phone Kumbu at 011 293202 or Mondli at 011 -7256711. Photo: Reginald Mbongani.



As proud as a peacock

a woman's true story

After having sex one night I said to him: 'Ai, have you finished?'

He said: 'Yes'.

I said: 'Are you happy?'

He said: 'Why?'

I said: 'I'm just asking because I feel you are only interested in yourself'.

He became angry and as he became angry I also became angry. Eventually he cooled off and fell asleep.

But I remained angry seeing how he was feeling nice and okay and relaxing after sex and leaving me on the other side. I couldn't sleep. I told myself this is one thing I could not allow to happen again. I knew when he woke up he may want sex again. I would rather go home than sleep with him again just to satisfy him.

It was after twelve at night and dark. When I got outside I hesitated but I told myself I could not sleep. I thought to myself: 'No, I cannot travel all the way from Soweto to Alexander just to satisfy him.' I saw a car coming and I waved. It flashed past but he came back. Yes, I was taking a risk. But I felt I could not continue in my boyfriend's house. If he felt there was something wrong he would have listened when I spoke to him about it. But he didn't.

I loved my boyfriend very much and I had been with him for quite some time. He was a gentleman and very handsome. But this problem was something I couldn't take.

The driver of the car reversed,



opened the window and asked why was I there at that time of night. I

told him I had a problem. I asked if he could take me to the taxi terminus in Johannesburg.

He said it was late and he didn't know what to do. But he said he would hate to pass by the following morning and see a dead woman lying here. In the end he took me home. On my way from Alexander to Soweto I started to cool off. I started to discuss it with him. I told him: 'It's what you people are doing to us'. He even slowed down to listen to what I was saying.

He said he didn't know it hurt women when men behaved like that. He said he thought having sex was just to please one person - the man. He said women didn't ever complain about it. He dropped me right in front of our gate. I thanked him and I went in. I had given him something to think about.

The next morning I felt proud of what I had done. I had not kept quiet about the problem. My boyfriend worked near to me. He had a friend and I'm sure when he arrived at work he told his friend about what happened. My boyfriend's friend was very surprised. We started to debate because I was asking them questions and they were asking me questions.

I asked my women colleagues how they felt about this whole

thing. One woman said: 'You are telling the truth. We have this problem and we are not in a position to voice it because if you say something, you will be called names. Women are only in love to satisfy not to be satisfied.'

My boyfriend was very sorry for his attitude but I couldn't forgive him. If he felt that was wrong he should have done something at the time rather than say: 'I'm tired I want to go to sleep'. That is the attitude we get from men.

These things need to be discussed openly because it affects the relationship of two people. Because men are dominant they think they can do whatever they like whenever they like. Even if a man is married he can divorce you today and get married tomorrow. He can go out and propose love to any woman he likes. If a man sees a pretty woman he will want to sleep with her, but a woman doesn't just see a handsome man and want to sleep with him. She wants to know him better.

I've seen that nowadays our women have started to realise that men are doing a wrong thing. Many women even feel that they would rather stay without a boyfriend than stay with men who don't show they care.

I left my boyfriend. I'm one person who doesn't like to be messed up. And I don't like messing other people up.

I made an impact on him and he keeps on reminding me of this. He says openly that I taught him a lesson. In fact he said he wants to marry me but I said 'no ways'. I would prefer to go to the next one and teach him rather than to teach this one who knows. I had talked to him like a human being and he felt because I'm a woman I just had to keep quiet. I felt great that at long last I had voiced my problem. I felt as proud as a peacock. ☺

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Rose Ngwenya

SPEAK: What does AZAPO stand for, and what is its vision for a future South Africa?

Rose: AZAPO promotes socialism. We have workers' interests at heart and we believe in starting at the grass roots. People say socialism never worked in Eastern Europe. This was not socialism. It was bureaucratism - people claiming to be socialists took power for themselves. This failed, not socialism.

What we want to see is all people being seen and treated as equals and this can only happen under socialism. For capitalism to survive somebody down there is exploited and we know blacks are being exploited for the well-being of the rich. When we talk about black we mean everyone who is oppressed economically, socially, sexually and racially. This takes in so-called Indians and coloureds.

SPEAK: What about white people?

Rose: We don't open membership to whites for strategic reasons. White people have never under-gone what we have. They will try and be sympathetic but they will never have the feelings we have regarding oppression. They are from the status quo. They have privileges to vote. They should make their own people aware and work with us. We have supportive groups of whites overseas.

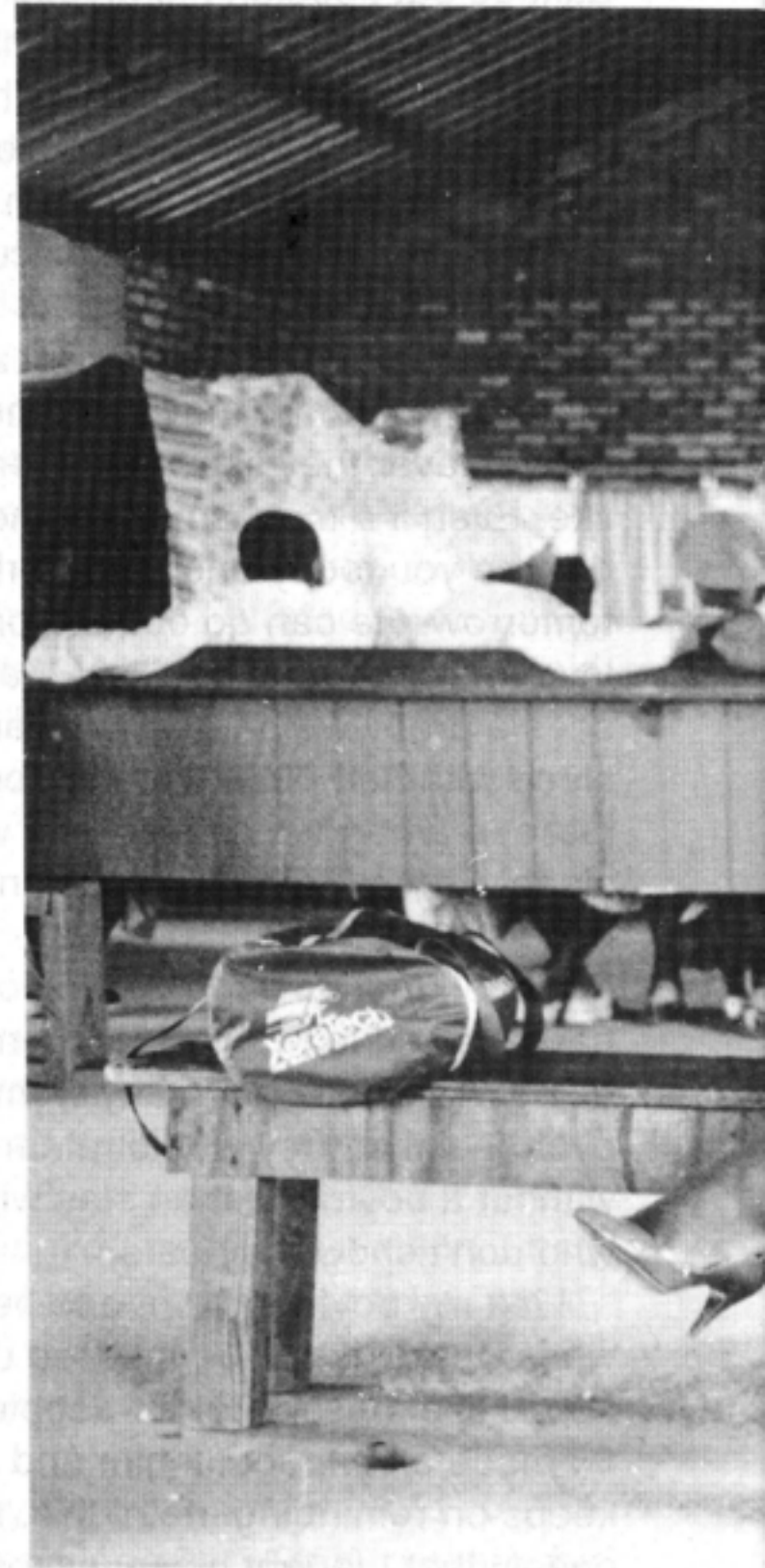
We are guarding against whites coming into our organisations and taking over front positions because they are better educated. We cannot be led by them.

A lot of people see us as discriminating against whites. This is not true. No Azania will be present without whites. Equality includes whites.

SPEAK: Does AZAPO have links with other organisations that stand for socialism?

Rose: Yes, WOSA. (Workers Organisation for Socialist Action)

SPEAK: What about the South African Communist Party (SACP)?



Rose: We speak the same language. But the SACP is a white-dominated organisation. This is why we do not have close links. But there are no bad feelings.

Rose Ngwenya is President of Imbeleko, the Women's wing of AZAPO. Shamim Meer of SPEAK met with Rose to ask her about both AZAPO and Imbeleko. Photo:Lesley Lawson.

Organisation) was formed.

SPEAK: Could you tell us about Imbeleko?

Rose: We have Imbeleko because we know that women have unique problems. We saw the need for a national organisation for women. We have a student body AZASM (Azanian Student Movement), a youth body, AZAYO (Azanian Youth Organisation) and a women's body, Imbeleko.

Imbeleko concentrates on women's affairs. It was formed in 1987. A few of us, some already AZAPO members, came together and discussed issues facing women in this country. People were being necklaced - mothers were forced to drink Sta-soft while shopping during consumer boycotts. In Wattville people would be woken as early as 2am to be told to come and kill others. A lot of people were being killed. The very innocent or elderly were being killed. We said: 'this is our problem'. We asked ourselves: 'what are we doing as women?' We saw that women were not taking part in the struggle - they were not attending rent or school meetings. We felt this was working against us because children would have no one who

SPEAK: When was AZAPO formed?

Rose: AZAPO was formed in 1977. It grew from an organisation of students in the days when the ANC (African National Congress) and the PAC (Pan Africanist Congress) were banned. In 1967 SASO (South African Students

Rose Ngwenya

could listen to their problems.

When necklacing started we said we have to intervene as women. In Wattville we intervened in one case and it calmed down. We got involved in Daveyton, in KwaThema. We sat down as mothers. We called a workshop where we discussed issues with the youth. We discussed unemployment and health. We said we need to start talking to our children. If we talk to our children they will not have the nerve of necklacing. A lot of children said they did not know what they were doing.

There were about six women from the East Rand. There were not a lot of us. We got our membership by talking the language of the people.

SPEAK: Tell us some of the things Imbeleko has done.

Rose: Women are oppressed from childhood. Women are prepared for marriage. When you don't get married you are called 'Lefetwa' meaning 'marriage has passed you by'. This makes women frustrated. They will then sit in beer halls or sell their bodies as prostitutes. We encourage women to have self-reliance. Self-esteem must be revived. We encourage women not to depend on men. There are not enough men for all women to get married. And marriage is not that pleasing anyway. A lot of homes are headed by women. Women are good but are not made to believe they can make it.

Imbeleko runs self-help projects. We provide training in bricklaying, carpentry and upholstery. We go to skills training schools and tell them we are an organisation of unemployed members who need training for members. We try to pay for the training. We get women to pool together money for transport to the classes. At the end of 1988 we had our first trainees. But there are financial problems with this project. There is no full time employee.

We run a health project. People can't work if they are not healthy. Black women have a very high risk of cancer of the cervix. We took it upon ourselves to educate women on cancer of the cervix. Women who have this don't even know

SPEAK



what this is. There is no way you will discover you have this unless you have a pap smear test. We try to provide tests. We have doctors who volunteer their services from CHAP - Community Health Awareness Programme - a part of AZAPO. Six to ten doctors provide screening for any sickness like high blood pressure or diabetes. CHAP pays for the pap smears. We have had six pap smear clinics so far between 1988 and 1990. This year we have financial difficulties in organising this.

Another project is the 'Adopt to Educate' project. Bursaries are mostly given for high school and college students. The younger lot are left out. Children who should be at school are not at school. We go to see parents and find out why children are not at school. We negotiate with principals and pay the fees. In one area we had thirteen children for whom we paid school fees and got their uniforms sewn for them. We keep track on school results.

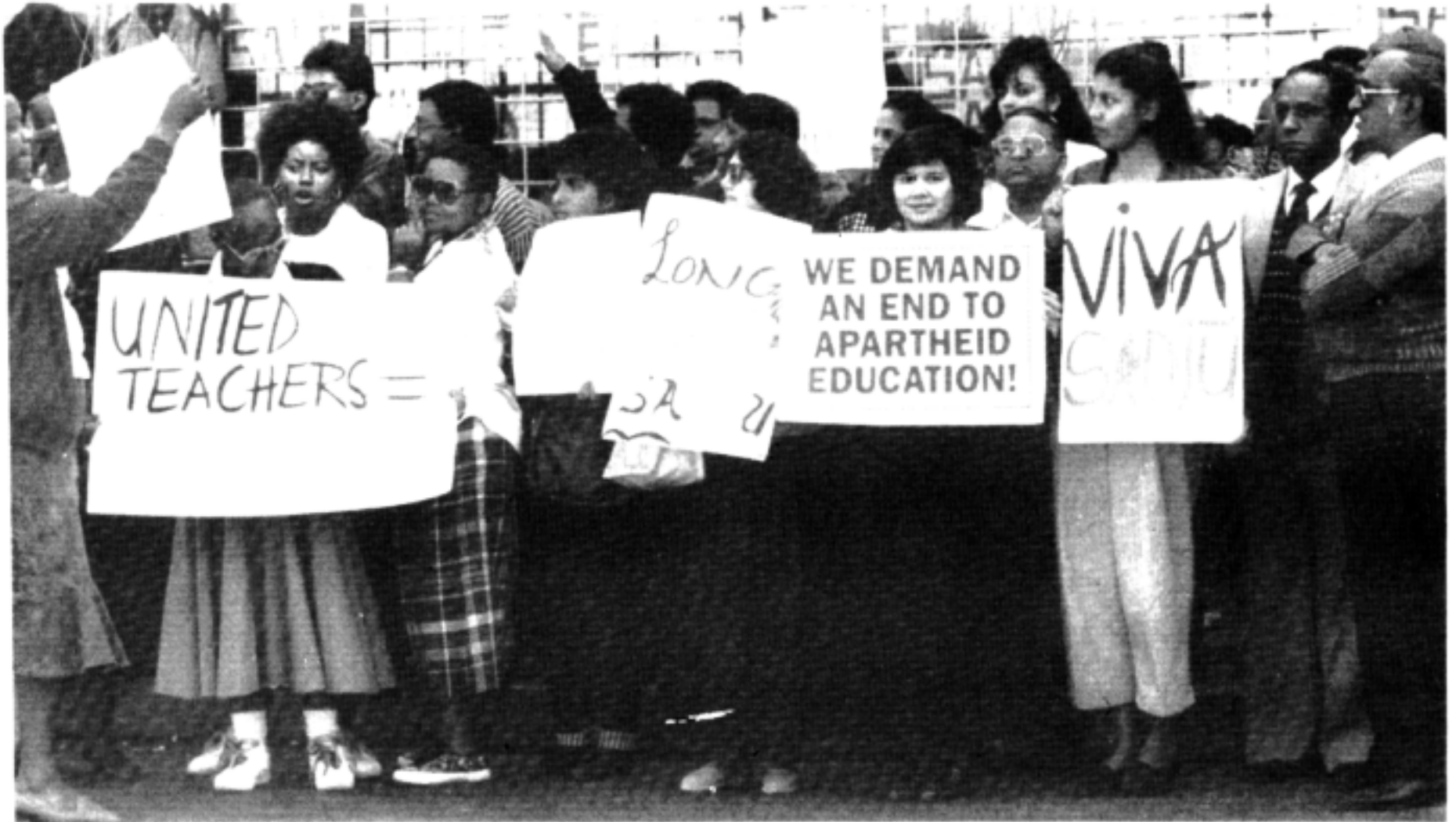
We try to educate domestic workers with better skills.

Our biggest base is in Sobantu in Natal. We have sewing machines and knitting machines. Ten women share what they get. This is how they survive. Another co-operative is in KwaNdebele. Ten families are doing fine on chicken farming with it.

We run a day care centre in Tsakane called Sakhisizwe. There are 22 children there. Three people are employed full time. The helpers are trained.

You don't have to join AZAPO to join Imbeleko. Some members are also ANC members. Parents coming together will help to bring peace to children. Imbeleko members pay 50c to join and 50c a month. To survive, we ask for 2% of the salary of prominent women members who earn more than R400.00. ☺

Empower the women - empower the nation!



The South African Democratic Teachers Union (SADTU) made history in South Africa in July this year. It was the first time a teachers' organisation has held a conference just to discuss the empowerment of women in education.

500 delegates from SADTU's 15 regions came together for two days to try to work out the best way of empowering women in education. According to the University of Natal's Education Policy Unit, women make up 62.2% of all teachers in government schools. Yet they do not get the same benefits as male teachers.

Debate went on in all regions before the conference as to whether male SADTU members could be delegates to the conference. In the end it was decided that no delegation should have more than 15% of men.

One delegate said after the conference: "Even though men were 15% of the delegates,

they spoke more than 50% of the time - sometimes 80% of the time!"

Another delegate said sometimes the men came up with more progressive ideas than the women.

The conference decided to set up a gender committee as a way of making sure that women's position in education is advanced. One of the roles of the gender committee will be to plan and put into action, programmes of affirmative action to empower women in education. The committee will be represented at the national executive committee level of SADTU.

The conference also resolved to look into the conditions of service facing women teachers. They want to get rid of all discrimination against women teachers.

"The empowerment of women in education is the responsibility of each and every SADTU member," said Vivienne Carelse, regional chairperson of SADTU Western Cape. ♣

Mamphela Ramphele

a black woman challenging a white, male world



Photo: Justin Sholk

Dr Mamphela Ramphele is the first woman, and the first black person, ever to be deputy principal at the University of Cape Town (UCT). Her job is to make sure UCT puts its belief of non-racism and non-sexism into practice. Gaye Davis reports.

When you walk to Dr Mamphela Ramphele's new office at the University of Cape Town (UCT) you go past huge oil-paintings hung on the walls. They are paintings of the people who have been UCT principals in the past. Each and every painting is of a white man.

Gone are the days when UCT was open only to white men. Today you will find men and women students of all colours on the campus. UCT says it is committed to non-racialism and non-sexism. It has been easy for the university to say this. It has been harder to put it into practice. Part of Dr Ramphele's job is to do this.

"My job is to make sure that UCT lives up to its belief of being non-racial and non-sexist,"

she explained. "I have to make sure that this university becomes a place where opportunities are truly equal. This applies to both blacks and women," Mamphela said.

Many battles lie ahead. But when Dr Ramphele decides to do something, she does not rest until it is done. "I don't give up a goal that I've set for myself," she says. "That's something I've carried out since I was a child ... I am a rather determined person."

If Mamphela had not been strong she would long ago have been crushed between the grinding stones of apartheid. She was born in 1947 in Bochum, near Pietersburg. Her parents were both teachers.

By 1977, she had qualified as a doctor and had founded the Zanempilo Community Health Centre at King Williamstown. She was also in love with the Black Consciousness leader, Steven Bantu Biko.

One day the security police arrived at her clinic. They brought with them a banning order banishing her for five years to Lenyenye, a place she had never even heard of, far away in the north-eastern Transvaal, near Tzaneen.

When she arrived in Lenyenye, she found she could not even speak the language of the people who lived there. But she could see she was needed. She started up a clinic which she called 'Ithuseng', the Sotho word which means "help yourselves". She got a brickyard going, planted a communal garden and started a women's group and a literacy programme. Lenyenye was a resettlement area and the people were very poor.

When the police arrested Biko, Mamphela was in hospital in Tzaneen. She was pregnant with their child and afraid she would lose it in another miscarriage. She was still in hospital when the news came that Biko had died in detention. When the baby, a boy, was born, she called him Hlumelo - Xhosa for "sprig from a new branch".

Those were the darkest days of her life. But when she remembers them now, she does not speak of the pain. Instead, she tells of the people who helped her.

"I have been very, very lucky," she said. "At bad times in my life there has always been someone to pick me up and help me through a difficult stage."

She spoke of the Catholic priest at Tzaneen. "He looked after me emotionally and without that I wouldn't have survived. Physically perhaps, but not as a whole person."

Her banning order was lifted in July 1984, but she stayed on at Lenyenye for some time. She married and had another son, Malusi. The community health programme she started was an excellent example of what could be done.

Mamphela has done a lot of research. She has studied the conditions in the men's hostels. And the way apartheid has affected the lives of children. She has travelled overseas to the United States. She has spoken about her work at conferences both inside and outside South Africa. She was one of two writers of a book about poverty and the solution to poverty in South Africa.

Mamphela wants to see "more black faces in the top administration" and more women "at every level" of the university. She wants to make sure that both women and black people stand more of a chance of being employed at UCT.

"I don't believe in promoting people simply because they are women or black," she said. "People will say that's why they got the job. I don't like quotas, but you have to have targets." She does not belong to any political party, but she is strongly committed to a non-racial, non-sexist, democratic South Africa. She believes that being a member of one political party would hold back her work because at the university there are people from many different political views. She wants to be able to relate to all of them.

"It is important for me to be open to everybody," she said.

Dr Mamphela Ramphela has a message for the women of South Africa. She says:

"Women have made men into kings. Most organisations function only because women run them.

"Women must believe in themselves and realise they can bring about change if they choose. They should move away from the idea that they are victims of male dominance and that they can do nothing as long as men think the way they do."

One day a new painting will be hung at the University of Cape Town - a painting of the new principal. Perhaps this time, it will not be of a white male, but of a black woman. ☺

Marion Sparg, MK soldier, ANC NEC member

Sparks not flowers

Marion Sparg's name first hit the newspaper headlines when she was arrested in 1986 for bombing John Vorster Square police station in Johannesburg. She was the first white woman MK soldier to be arrested in South Africa.

Marion was recently released after serving four-and-a-half years of a 25-year sentence for 'treason'. She says she has no regrets.

Marion joined Umkhonto weSizwe, the ANC's army, in 1981. She did this because she believed it was an important way of showing that some white South Africans were serious about liberation in South Africa.

Marion became politically aware when she went to Rhodes University to study journalism in 1979. She had hoped the Progressive Federal Party (PFP) (now the Democratic Party) would play a real role in opposing the government. But when the PFP didn't even oppose Republic Day celebrations in 1981 she lost all hope in them. To make her point she, together with Damian de Lange, bombed the PFP offices in Johannesburg in May

Marion Sparg at thirty-two years old is one of the youngest members of the new National Executive Committee (NEC) of the African National Congress. She also happens to be one of the few women voted onto the ANC NEC. Glenda Daniels reports.

1981. Soon after this Marion became a member of the ANC.

Marion left the country to join Umkhonto we Sizwe (MK) later in 1981. She trained in the camps of Angola and then went to work in the ANC's Information Department. But after the South African Defence Force (SADF) bombed houses in Maseru, Lesotho in 1982, she felt she had to go back to the camps. She felt it was urgent for white youth to be involved in combat. She believed that both black and white South Africans had to be seen on the ground fighting for the liberation of South Africa.

Marion said many black comrades in the camp were at first very surprised that a white woman had joined them for

military training. But they soon got used to this and welcomed her being there.

Marion felt that women in the ANC were treated differently from men and this held women back. Women were treated as the 'flowers of the revolution'. But she found some of the emotional support from men helped. She said: "Sometimes on special days the men would fetch us flowers and you can imagine finding a flower in Angola was difficult!"

Marion said the fact that women and men soldiers trained together was good. In some liberation movements women were trained separately from men.

When she came back into the country secretly as an ANC soldier, Marion knew she stood a good chance of being arrested. She planted a bomb at John Vorster Square police station in Johannesburg. And after her arrest this is where she was kept with shackles around her ankles. The shackles made a lot of noise as she walked. The policemen used to stick their heads out of their offices and joke as she went past to the interrogation room. "Watch out for bombs, here comes the bomber!"

Marion Sparg- Women in the ANC were treated different from men

photo: Karen Hurt, SPEAK



they'd say.

But it was not all jokes. Marion felt threatened by these men who would, in a quiet way, make her worry about rape. They would say things to try to make her feel upset. Marion said:

"They'd say things like 'how many black men did you sleep with?' Or 'you mustn't get taken in by the ANC, they only recruit women because they want to sleep with them'". Marion said the most important thing for her in prison was the friendships that grew with the young prison warders. She said: "They were young girls who did not have strong views

on the world. It's very different seeing someone on the television and knowing them as bombers or terrorists. Here they were faced with real flesh and blood and they could see we were normal people. We used to call ourselves 'the zoo' because some of the warders would call other warders to come and look at us. But they made me hopeful for the future of the country because we related on a personal level. They had open minds. As Thabo Mbeki said: 'suddenly Pretoria has begun to realise that we don't have horns but are very ordinary.'"

Marion studied while she

was in prison. She also came out of prison with boxes of jerseys that she'd knitted. She was able to watch TV in prison and says her favourite programmes were LA Law and Justice for All.

Marion has returned to East London where she will be starting a ANC Department of Information and Publicity. She says her family there are very supportive. Her mother is a Christian who found her being part of MK a bit difficult to accept. But when she was arrested her family supported her. She was above all their daughter, not 'a terrorist'.

And after her release from prison Marion was surprised to feel welcomed by East Londoners. "Whites in the street, who I had never seen in my life were saying to me: 'Welcome back.' The ANC in the area were surprised because they thought it was a conservative town," she said. "Of course there were others who said: 'Oh, you're back, we went to the army because of people like you' and before I could respond they'd say: 'And you went because of people like us.'"

Let's hope that Marion will play a role in putting women's equality onto the agenda of the male-dominated NEC. ♣

A new book by a South African woman writer, Sibongile Sithole, is out. It is called *Beer, Songs and Quarrels*. Gcina Mhlope reviewed it for SPEAK

Beer, Songs and Quarrels

This book is very simply written. This, together with the stories, keeps inviting you to carry on reading. It's like drinking water from a secret spring deep in the forest. These stories are both very personal and tell you about the past.

Sibongile invites us to her home and we can almost smell the green vegetables her mother cooked for her as a little girl. The ease with which she got on with her Indian neighbours is quite enviable in these times. The wooden houses in D section of kwaMashu location makes one think of today's shack dweller. "My people were six people living together in one room," she says.

Sibongile tells us about the 'white valiant' which scared the residents. Then came another car called the Black Cat. This one was known for stealing children for muti. Her daughter Sandile did not come back from school one day. Sibongile panicked because she thought maybe the Black Cat had taken her. But they found Sandile. You can almost hear her sigh of relief in her words: "Aai, I am thanking the Lord because I found you."



The stories flow from light to sad events - all with very real feeling. There are many stories: from the time her husband started drinking and went out with other girlfriends, to the day she had to walk home from the hospital after giving birth to her second girl. She tells us of how her children later suffered after she had run away from her husband; of her mother's funeral and how people spoke well about her as a Christian. She tells us how things have changed with funerals. And of the three wives who met for the first time at their husband's grave side.

This book came together in a very exciting way. Sibongile started by telling her life stories

to her friends. They liked the stories but they were not sure if others would find them interesting.

Sibongile's response was: "I think these are right for the readers because people are forgetting how things used to be." I like that!

This book is so little in volume and yet so big in content. A number of people encouraged Sibongile - Andrea Engel and Heather Silove Howe who helped to write her stories down and the students of the Natal Technikon who did the wonderful drawings deserve many thanks. They have all helped to deliver a baby to the world - another WOMAN writer!

Sibongile's mother's stories at the end wrap the book up so neatly. Wonder of wonders, the unbeatable rabbit is tricked and gets braaiied by the giant.

This book is an invitation to other new writers. Sibongile and friends have started to braai illiteracy!

The book was published by the Centre for Adult Education. If you would like to buy a copy send R5.00 to the Centre for Adult Education, University of Natal, Durban, King George V Avenue, Durban, 4001, South Africa. The phone number is 031-8163086. ☺

Preventing Pregnancy-sterilization

Sterilization is a big decision for a man or woman to take because it means a permanent prevention of pregnancy. In other words, once you are sterilized you will never have children.

Sterilization for men - vasectomy

Male sterilization is called vasectomy. This is a simple operation that takes less than half an hour. It is usually done under local anaesthetic. The man does not have to stay in hospital after the operation.

How does a vasectomy prevent pregnancy?

When a man ejaculates he produces white liquid called semen. The semen has sperm in it. When the sperm joins with a woman's egg a pregnancy happens. Semen is made in the man's testicles. Some people call testicles 'balls'. When a man has a vasectomy the tube which carries the sperm is cut. The man still produces semen, but there are no sperm in it.

How is a vasectomy done?

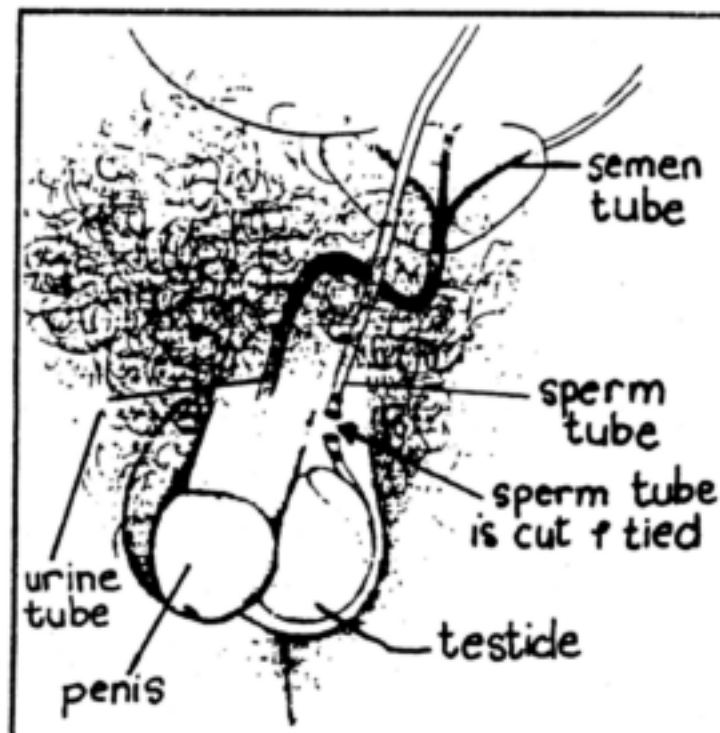
When a man has a vasectomy a small cut is made at the top of his scrotum. The scrotum is the bag of skin that holds and protects the man's testicles.

How will he feel after the operation?

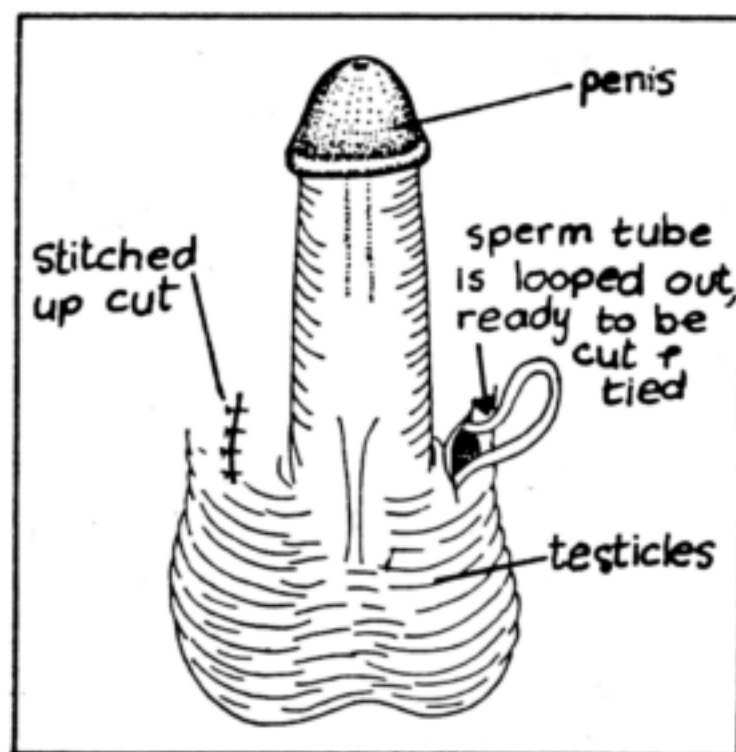
A vasectomy is a very safe operation that is unlikely to have any complications. After the vasectomy, the man's testicles may swell a little, and be a bit painful and bruised for a few days. It would be best if he takes somebody along who can travel home with him. He will be able to go home straight after the operation.

When can he start having sex?

He can have sex again as soon as it feels comfortable. But he should use condoms until he has ejaculated about thirty times. This is because there is still sperm stored in his body, which take a little time to disappear. If he wants to be very sure he has no sperm left, he can go



Inside view of vasectomy.



Outside view of vasectomy.

to a doctor and have a 'sperm count' done.

Will the vasectomy affect a man's sex life?

Men especially seem to worry about the effects of a vasectomy on their love life. Clinics in other parts of the world use male counsellors who have had the operation.

As long as the man is very sure he wants the vasectomy, his sex life should not change after the operation. It does not make him less interested in having sex and does not change his enjoyment of sex. Because the sperm make up just one small part of his semen, he won't even notice a difference when he ejaculates.

We asked Dayalan, who had a vasectomy in 1981, to tell SPEAK about it.

"I was with my partner when she gave birth and I was horrified seeing the pain she went through. When we decided we did not want any more kids I felt she had gone through enough already, being the one who took Pills and other contraception and being the one who went through pregnancy and childbirth. I felt it was my turn to take responsibility for prevention."

How did he feel about the operation? "I was surprised," he said. "It was so straightforward. My partner came with me. We just went into the doctors rooms, I had a small operation, and it was all over."

Has the vasectomy affected his sex life? Dayalan laughed, a bit embarrassed. "Actually," he said, "it has improved my sex life. There is no interruption of sex and there is no fear of pregnancy."

"It's all in the mind," he said, "it hasn't destroyed my manhood!"

Is the operation always a success?

In only about one out of 1000 cases does the operation not work. This makes vasectomy a very successful operation for most men.

Are there any complications?

Vasectomy is one of the safest operations and methods of birth control. There could be infection or swelling in the testicles within a few weeks of the operation. A course of antibiotics will sort this out.

Can the operation be changed back (reversed)

It is very difficult and costly to reverse this operation and it may not even succeed. The reversal operation is only successful for



between two and three men out of every ten men. Health workers we spoke to said a man who has a vasectomy should take it as being final. This is why the man must be very sure he wants it done.

Sterilization for women - tubal ligation

Female sterilization is called tubal ligation although people often talk about it as 'having your tubes tied.' The woman usually needs to have a general anaesthetic for this operation. This makes it a more serious operation than a vasectomy.

How does tubal ligation prevent pregnancy?

Tubal ligation prevents pregnancy by cutting the fallopian tubes so eggs from the woman's ovaries cannot move from the ovary to the womb to meet the man's sperm. And the man's sperm cannot move up the tube to meet the woman's egg.

How is a tubal ligation done?

This used to be done by a small operation just above her pubic hair. These days this operation is done with an instrument called a laparoscope. This instrument looks like a thin telescope. It has a very bright light built into it.

When a woman has the sterilization she is

usually given a general anaesthetic which puts her to sleep for the operation. In a few places, like in Zola Clinic in Soweto, the woman does not have to be put to sleep. The doctor who operates on her uses an injection called a local anaesthetic. This injection prevents her from feeling pain but she stays awake during the operation.

A small cut is made on the lower part of the woman's tummy. Another cut is made just beneath the belly button. The laparoscope is pushed through the cut beneath her belly button. Another instrument is pushed through the other cut near her fallopian tube, along which her eggs travel. This instrument takes hold of the fallopian tube and either cuts or ties it. Sometimes a small metal clip is put around each tube.

The operation usually involves a short stay in hospital.

What will she feel after the operation?

After having a tubal ligation the woman may feel some pain and discomfort for up to a week after the operation. She may be offered some pain-killers for this. She must not do any work, which includes housework, for a few days.

When can she start having sex?

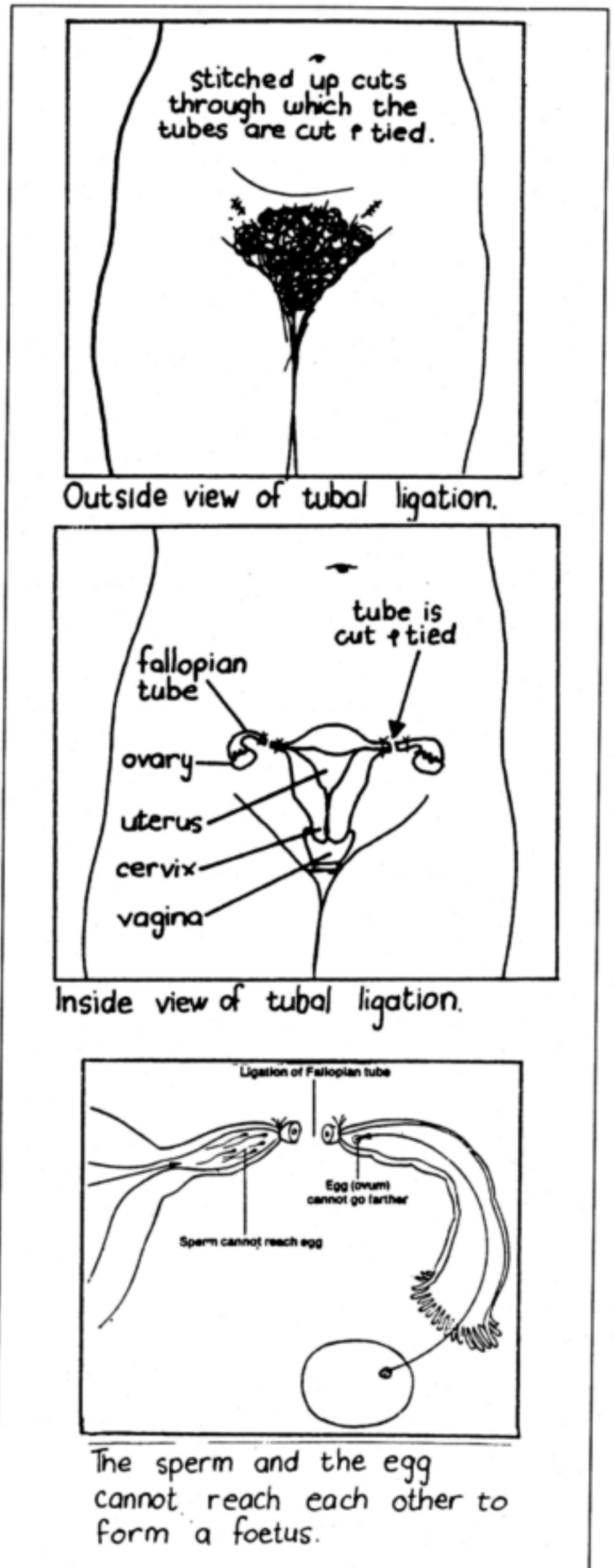
After having a tubal ligation the woman can have sex as soon as it feels comfortable for her. If she has a partner he must understand that she may feel pain and should be especially caring of her during this time. She and her partner do not need to use contraception.

Will a tubal ligation affect a woman's sex life?

As long as the woman is sure she wants the operation, tubal ligation does not affect her sex life.

Is the operation always a success?

The operation has a high success rate, but not as high as vasectomy. About one in 300 women becomes pregnant within two years of the operation. This can happen if there



was an egg present when the operation was done. This is why a contraceptive should be used right up to and just after the operation. Another reason could be if the woman's fallopian tube had a clip put on it and the clip wasn't put on properly. There is also a very, very small chance that the tube joins together again.

What are the possible complications?

In a very small number of cases, say two or three out of 100, there can be small complications. These could be injury to blood vessels, tissues or organs near the tubes, pelvic infection, infection in the cut or bladder infection. These can all be treated quickly and easily. In about two out of 1000 operations there can be bigger complications that would require surgery.

It is important to keep a special check on your health in the first few months after the operation.

Some women find that their periods get heavier and more uncomfortable after sterilization. Doctors cannot explain this.

Can the operation be changed back (reversed)?

An operation can be done to try to undo a tubal ligation. But it does not always work and it costs huge sums of money to do. Only 70 out of 100 women will manage to fall pregnant again after the operation. This kind of operation is not available through state health services. Medical aids do not pay for it to be done.

Attitudes towards sterilization

More women than men get sterilized. This is because men see prevention as women's responsibility. If men took more responsibility for childcare and contraception they would probably think more about vasectomy.

If you are in a stable relationship and you and your partner decide you do not want any or more children then you need to discuss which one of you is best suited to have an operation. Some men feel they should have a vasectomy since their partner has had all the hassles of contraception, pregnancy and childbirth to live through for years.

Even if you take the decision together for sterilization, problems can develop after the operation. Wendy, who had a tubal ligation said: "We agreed that I should have a sterilisation as we decided we only wanted two children. Now, 2 years later, my husband is behaving strangely. He keeps telling me

No more children sounds like a wonderful idea to me!



that I am a useless woman as I cannot have children. It hurts me very much and I would like to have the operation reversed."

Vasectomy is safer and simpler than tubal ligation and it does not require a stay in hospital.

Reasons for regrets with sterilization

Some people who have been sterilized later find they regret it. The most likely people to regret sterilization are

- * People who have changed their partners and want to have a baby with their new partner.
- * People who have lost a child or children through death and want more children.
- * People who were sterilized too young sometimes change their mind when they are older. Most doctors and clinics won't perform a sterilization on a young person who hasn't had children.

Do not rush into sterilization. It is a big and permanent decision. Take as long as you need to think about it. Don't make the decision under pressure or when you are feeling upset or unhappy. Make the decision in your own time when you are feeling good about yourself. Do not get pushed into it by health workers. Many women are asked to make the decision on sterilization when they are in labour. No woman should ever be told to make this decision when under pressure. Remember you have a right to refuse sterilization if it is not what you want. ☺

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