


Aug 89 (1)

LENASIA WOMENS CONGRESS

"WOMEN UNITE"



Affiliated to FEDTRAW

EDITORIAL

AUGUST 1989

In this special publication especially brought out to coincide with our National Womens Day Conference, we have decided to concentrate on issues relevant to us as women. As black women we are exploited because of our race, as women (both black and white) we are exploited as workers and abused because of our sex. The Lenasia Womens Congress as part of the Mass Democratic Movement, finds it necessary to address and fight oppression and exploitation wherever it exists.

Child Care, Education, Health, the Rights of Working Women, Legal Rights and Women Abuse are all issues that should concern us as women because they affect us all and we cannot just wish them away by ignoring them.

The article on the Homeless was included because we believe that there is much work to be done in that area.

Once again, we urge all women to join us to help fight the evils facing us as women and as an oppressed people. Write to us at P. O. Box 708 LENASIA, 1820.

Albertina Sisulu, a patron of the Lenasia Womens Congress. In the background is Sister Bernard Ncube who is president of Fedtraw.

"THERE CAN BE NO FREEDOM OF SOCIETY WHILST WOMEN ARE IN BONDAGE"

WOMENS CHARTER - 1954



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Aug 89 (2)

STOP WOMEN BATTERING!

Many women are abused by their husbands in a number of ways but in this article we want to concentrate on wife beating because in our work in and around Lenasia, we have found that this is happening to many, many women. Because wife battering is becoming so common in our community, we have invited People Opposed to Women Abuse (POWA) to speak about this terrible tragedy at our National Womens Day Conference today.

According to POWA wife battering does not take place in particular sections of the community only. It happens in all races, classes and religions. All kinds of men beat their wives and although it is not always easy to understand why men resort to violence, perhaps if we examine historically, male and female attitudes, roles and norms, we will begin to see why this occurs.

Throughout the history of mankind, women and men have not been brought up as equals. Traditionally and culturally, we have been conditioned into believing that men are more important and superior to women. Although we have come a long way from the time when girl babies were buried alive because it was such an embarrassment for the father, society still believe men are the superior sex. Most cultures teach women that it is the wife's "duty" to serve her husband irrespectively, unconditionally and forever more. This has become the norm and when a woman challenges these norms, some men construe this as "disobedience" and resort to violence.

Because most women do not speak about their husbands hitting them, the problem is not resolved and in fact escalates. Most women keep quiet says POWA, because of a number of reasons : she may be dependent on his wages and has no where to go; she may not want to go through the disgrace of a divorce; she worries about the children.

The people at POWA who deal with this problem daily say that it helps to talk to someone you trust. They do not tell women what to do but they do help women to understand their positions and also help to make their own decisions. If you are a victim of Women Abuse, call POWA in Johannesburg by dialling 642-4345.



Courtesy of SPEAK

IT'S A STRANGE WORLD, ISN'T IT?

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Aug 89 (3)

IT IS LEGAL NOT TO VOTE

A vote for Rashida Ebrahim or any of the other candidates is a vote for apartheid and all its evils - unequal education, unequal health, group areas etc.

Are we as mothers, wives and sisters going to stand back and allow our lives to be dictated to by people who do not have our interests at heart?

The Lenasia Womens Congress rejects Rashida Ebrahim's attempts to project herself as a leader of the women of Lenasia or anywhere else. That which she and all the candidates stand for is an insult to human dignity. We do not believe in working within the system because we believe in abolishing apartheid.

The House of Delegates is a mere puppet body which can only decide on "Own Affairs" issues like drains, trains, housing and education and not "General Affairs" which are reserved for the senior partners of apartheid.

Throughout the country our people are resisting heroically. In 1984 the people in Lenasia totally rejected the tri-cameral parliament. Let us continue with the heroic resistance against the farcical bi-election and not be duped into casting back door votes.

**THIS SPACE
RESERVED FOR
OUR LEADERS**

Have you ever seriously considered the plight, the suffering and the hardships of the homeless? Sit back and think how a mother in a "squatter" camp feels about not having a secure roof over her head. She is a woman, just like you, created by God and with the same aspirations that any other mother, Black or White, rich or poor, has for herself and her family.

Daily we hear people complaining about "squatters". The next time we hear someone hitting out against the homeless, ask yourself, "Who are these people and why do they live in shanties made from wood, zink and in many instances, even plastic sheeting?"

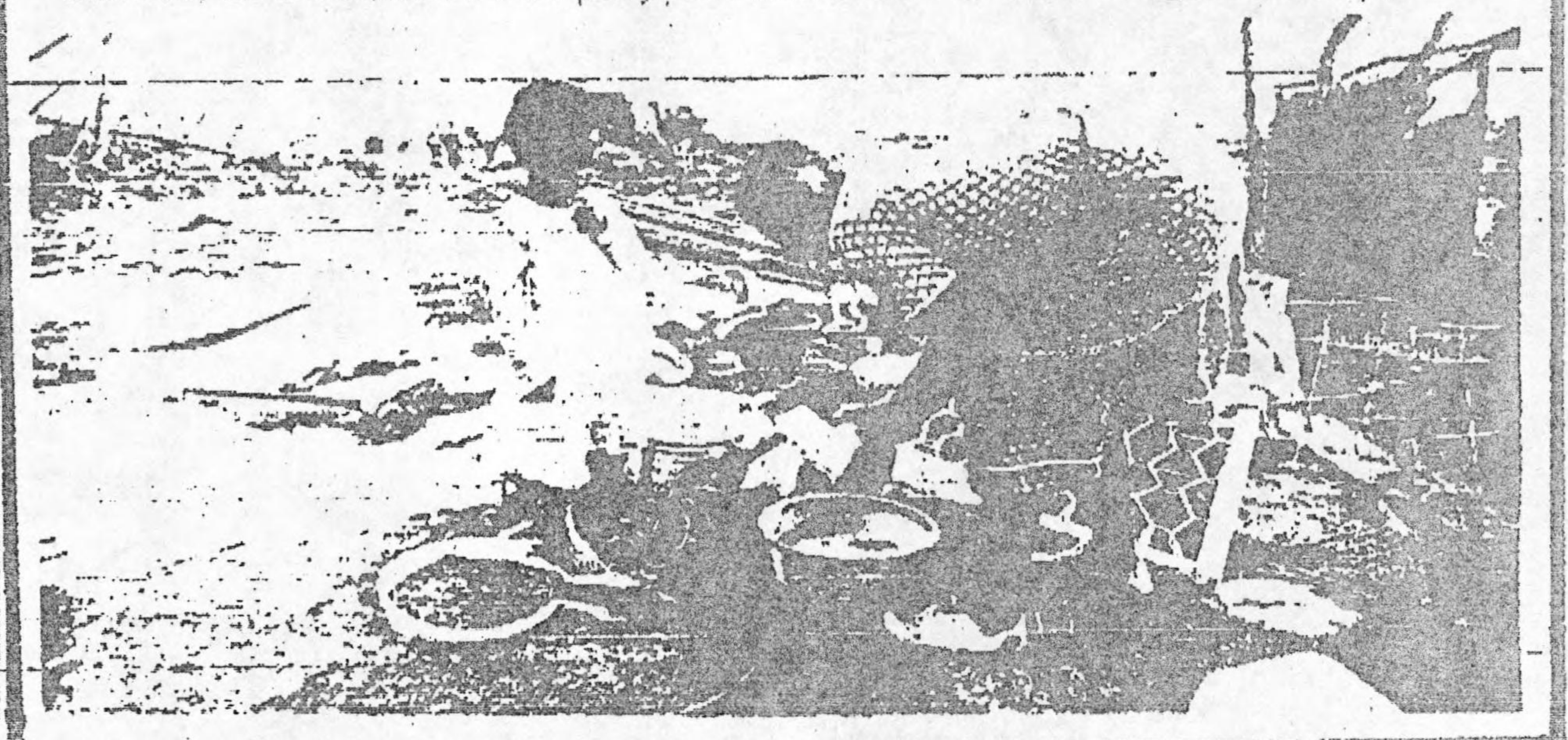
The Lenasia Women's Congress, like all the other organisations in the Mass Democratic Movement, believe, very sincerely, that the homeless community is a product of the apartheid system. If people were provided with adequate housing, which is the State's responsibility, we would have no "Squatter Camps".

In our working with the homeless, we ask them the same questions over and over again. Inevitably, we get the same answers over and over again. People in the camps tell us that they came to look for employment in the towns and cities because they were facing starvation in the rural areas. Others say that when they were lucky enough to secure jobs in the rural areas, the "money was so little" that they could not feed nor clothe their families.

The only alternative, they say, was to come to work in the urban areas "where the money is better". However, the problem is not solved when they come to what they believe will be greener pastures, because by large, accommodation is a problem. Some domestic workers said that some "madams" did not mind them sleeping in their garages but that they did not want the husbands around. So, they erect shacks in the vicinity of their work place and eke out a living.

Like all people in all communities, you will find both bad and good elements. So, just as it is incorrect to assume that all the homeless are without fault, it is equally unjust to believe that they are all "thieves and loiterers". We will only begin to understand other people and their problems if we make the time and the effort to get to know them.

Organisations such as the Homeless Support Committee, (HSC) the South African Health Workers Congress (SAHWCO) and the Ananda Murgha are doing a lot to alleviate the suffering of the homeless. If after reading this, you feel that you would like to assist the homeless, or even to understand their plight, do contact us at P O Box 708, LENASIA, and we will put you in touch with the relevant organisations.



This page has been sponsored by H N R Fabricks

Aug 89 (5)

HEALTH CARE IS A BASIC RIGHT!

It is clear that the 98-bed hospital and existing health services in Lenasia and surrounding areas is inadequate to meet community needs. In this article we examine existing health services and what the state should in fact provide.

EXISTING HEALTH SERVICES ONE OUTPATIENT POLYCLINIC

- operates from Monday to Friday 8.00am to 4.00pm with no services for acute medical care outside "office" hours.
- no specialist service.
- is situated in Ext. 5, a well-to-do area, far away from the poorer areas such as Ext 10, 11, 2 where the greatest needs exists.
- the State has failed to provide transport especially for the poor and elderly to this poorly sited facility.

PREVENTATIVE SERVICE

- For extensions (1-7), this service is provided by the City of Johannesburg and consists of a Chief Medical Officer, a Nursing Officer, 4 public health nurses and other health workers.
- For extensions (8-11) and Lenasia South these services are virtually non-existent and no facilities have been built. These residents are paying more rates and taxes than Ext (1-7) residents. Presently there is 1 nursing sister for this area, ie (8-11 and Lenasia South). Many residents are knocking at the doors of the Johannesburg Clinic for immunizations.

From the above facts it is abundantly clear that the present health services are grossly inadequate and in a crisis situation.

WHAT THE STATE SHOULD BE PROVIDING

- Curative Services** - Responsibility of the Transvaal Provincial Administration. - This entails hospital services for the care of the sick and injured within 5km of residence. For a population estimated to be in the region of 300,000 (Greater Lenasia and environs ie, Klipspruit West, Mid-Ennerdale, Grassmere, Finetown, Unaville and Lenasia. The norm would be:
 - Hospitals: (100 - 400 beds) that is operating 24 hours per day, 7 days a week, open on public holidays and providing facilities for emergencies, accidents, intensive care and child birth.
 - Mental Health Service: provided on a 24 hour basis, 7 days a week, including provision for the hospitalization of the acutely ill patient.
 - Geriatric Service: Health care for the elderly including a frail care centre for those who may have for eg. suffered a stroke and is unable to look after themselves at home.
 - Dental Service: 24 hours, 7 days per week.
 - Ambulance Service: a 24 hour service available in the area that can respond within minutes.
 - Preventative Service or Community Service
 - Immunization against Polio, Tuberculosis and other infectious diseases.
 - Child health and feeding scheme for malnourished children.
 - Family planning service.
 - Screening for diseases such as cancer of the womb, diabetes and high blood pressure.
 - Providing advice, health information and support services such as rehabilitation of persons having suffered a heart attack.
 - Treatment of patients suffering from sexually transmitted disease.

All above services are to be provided **FREE** and are provided from **RATES** and **TAXES**.

HEALTH is OUT - RIGHT!
WOMEN UNITE AND DEMAND...
 • FREE HEALTH CARE • SAFE CONTRACEPTION
 • PAP SMEAR TESTS • PAID MATERNITY LEAVE
 • CRECHES
 • A LIVING WAGE

WOMEN MAKING HISTORY

We slipped out of our houses before anyone was awake, before the day itself was up. As we hurried to our meeting place in the wintry light of the quiet streets, we felt again for the piece of paper folded in our pockets. How can you know the excitement we felt, divided as it was between hope and fear? We met in small groups, our relief at seeing each other expressed in excited whispers, laughter at the imagined reactions of our husbands.

It was our day, the day we'd planned for months.

At the railway station were many more groups of women and the reality of being there together made us forget the doubts we'd had washing and dressing in our silent houses.

We began the singing before we were on the train, great waves of song. And when the first train came in, the women at the windows were singing too.

There were a few men on the train, workers of the early shift. We teased them, we were so proud of our mission: you thought we knew nothing about politics but we're not going to carry passes like you, we will not be stopped in the streets by police, raided at night by the blackjacks. We are mothers, we can't go to jail as often as you do. The coaches were filled with us, we were everywhere.

We'd come from all parts of the country for our day. By the time our train reached the capital, dawn had broken and before we spilled out into the streets, the word had been around: processions are banned today; to avoid arrest, walk in groups of three.

Buses and cars filled with chanting women had arrived. By now we were thousands.

How can I describe our feeling walking together, how can you know what it was like?

We were wearing the green and black of liberation, or tribal dress, brilliant proud colours. We walked with babies on our backs, children at our sides. We were a moving body of colour and song. We weren't Xhosa, Zulu or Sotho, we weren't Indian, coloured or white. We were women making history.

WE COME AS WOMEN UNITED IN OUR PURPOSE
TO SAVE THE AFRICAN WOMEN FROM THE
DEGRADATION OF PASSES. FOR TO US, AN
INSULT TO AFRICAN WOMEN IS AN INSULT TO
ALL WOMEN.

By the time we reached the government buildings we were twenty thousand. You've never seen twenty thousand women



9 AUGUST 1956

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7 HISTORY

together. We signed the papers for the prime minister. He wasn't there to see us, he missed such a sight. Then we waited in silence. A heavy silence that was as strong as we were many. And then again we sang: Now you have touched the women, you have struck a rock, you have dislodged a boulder, you will be crushed: Yes of course today we carry passes. In the end we had to: we couldn't get work, receive our pensions, even register our children if we didn't. But that August day almost thirty years ago showed us our strength. That day we were women.

This story comes from a book called 'The Parrots Egg', by A. Blondel, S. Lamb and A. Hashemian. Published by Raven Press. *Lowkey - SPEAK*



OUR PEOPLE CANNOT BE FREE WHILE OUR WOMEN ARE STILL IN CHAINS

Repression and resistance have become the marks of South African society. With restrictions, bannings, detentions and executions having become the way of life in this country, there has developed an urgent and dire need for challenge and change. Unity is the source of the great strength which is needed to break the chains which bind us in an oppressive society.

PEOPLE FROM ALL SECTORS NEED TO JOIN HANDS - YOUTH, WORKERS, STUDENTS AND WOMEN, TO FORM A UNITED FRONT.

Women form more than half of the population of this country, and the need for us to organise and participate in the National Democratic Struggle cannot be overemphasised.

As Black Women, the oppression we suffer is threefold:

FIRSTLY, as Blacks we are subjected to National oppression through laws which discriminate against us.

SECONDLY, many of us have already, and others soon will, join the ranks of the working class. In the workplace women are discriminated and exploited because of our apparent - differential - status. Working conditions, wages and benefits received by men far outweigh those received by women.

THIRDLY, sexual oppression is aimed at keeping women in a position of inferiority and subordination. The legal system in this country enforces upon women the status of a minor.

These three forms of oppression are like cogs in a machine geared to subjugate the female to a lesser state of being.

THIS WE CAN TAKE NO LONGER! We have to awaken as individuals, realise what is being perpetrated against us. We have to organise with vigour as masses of young women who will challenge the system. Our resistance will be a reaction to the repression of women and the repression of all those who suffer at the hands of the oppressors.

We, as young women, have to become active, we have to be in keeping with women in communities where the oppression suffered is greater and more direct. We cannot isolate ourselves from their struggle and remain oblivious to the suffering which riddles the society we live in. We do

not live in a vacuum and therefore cannot remain blind to the effects that Apartheid has on the people of this country.

Young women in Lenasia have to break out of their cocoons - see the reality and participate.

"We shall strive to unite women in common action for the removal of all political, legal, economic and social disabilities that face us as an oppressed group." (Women's Charter, 1954)

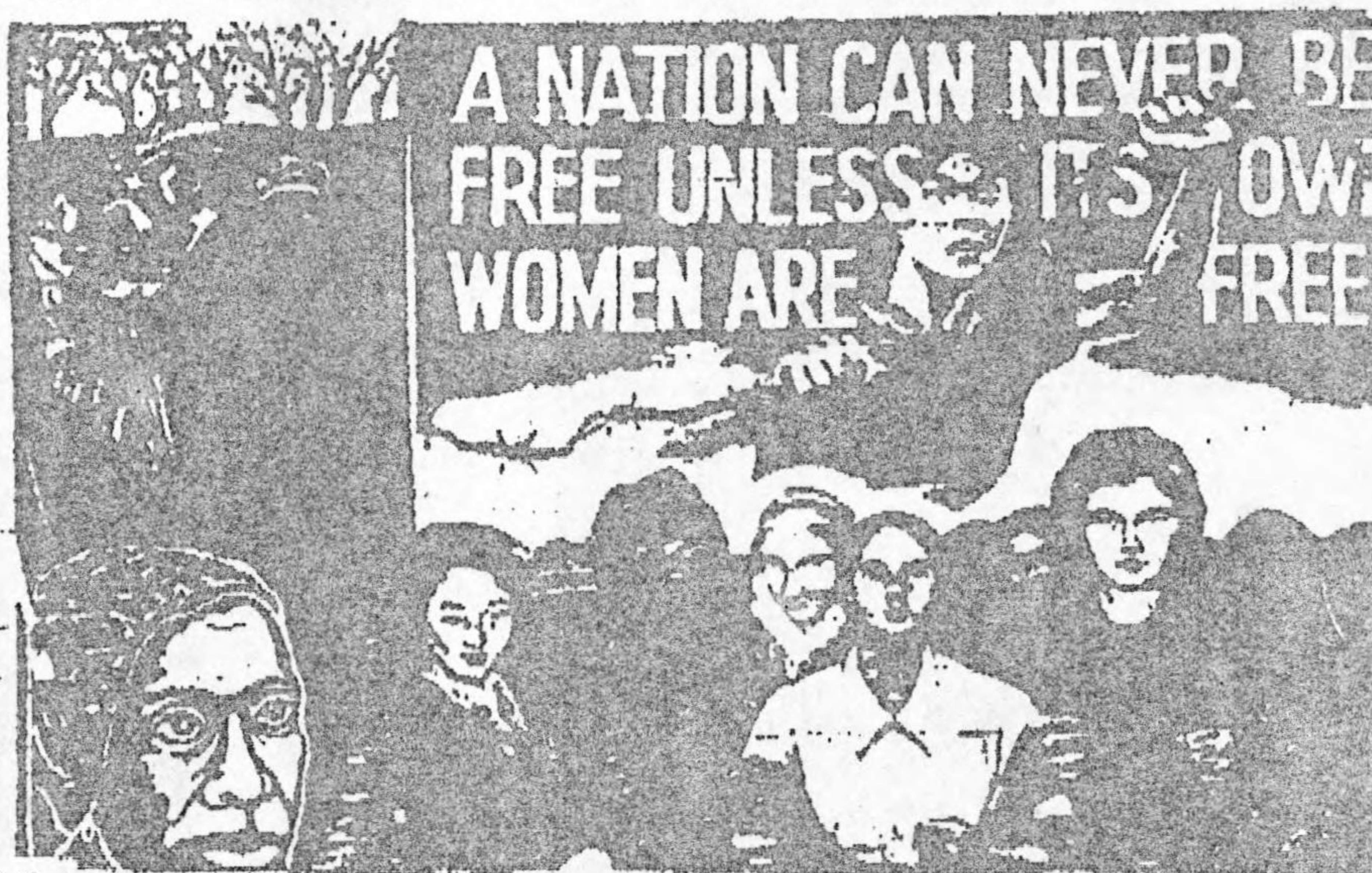
There is no clearly defined line between community issues and women's issues, therefore the relationship between women's organisations and people's organisations has to be an integral one.

The Lenasia Youth League commends and supports the recent launch of the Lenasia Womens Congress (LWC) - an organisation of women, FOR women.

"The Women's struggle for our rights is part of the struggle for a free South Africa. Our people cannot be free while our women are still in chains."

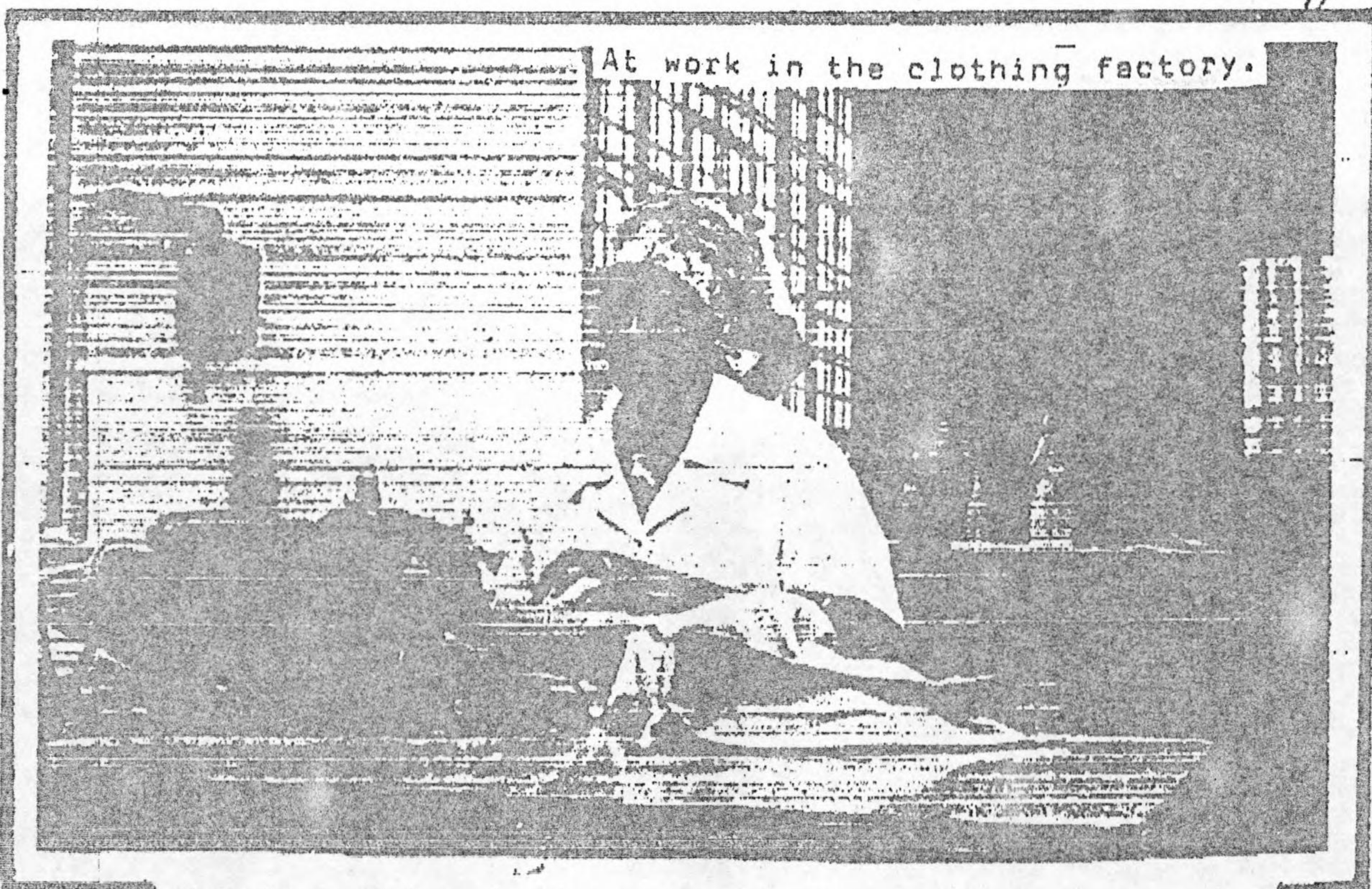
It is our duty as female youth to play our part - an integral part - in the struggle for the freedom of women and in the broader struggle for the liberation of our people. -

LENASIA YOUTH LEAGUE.



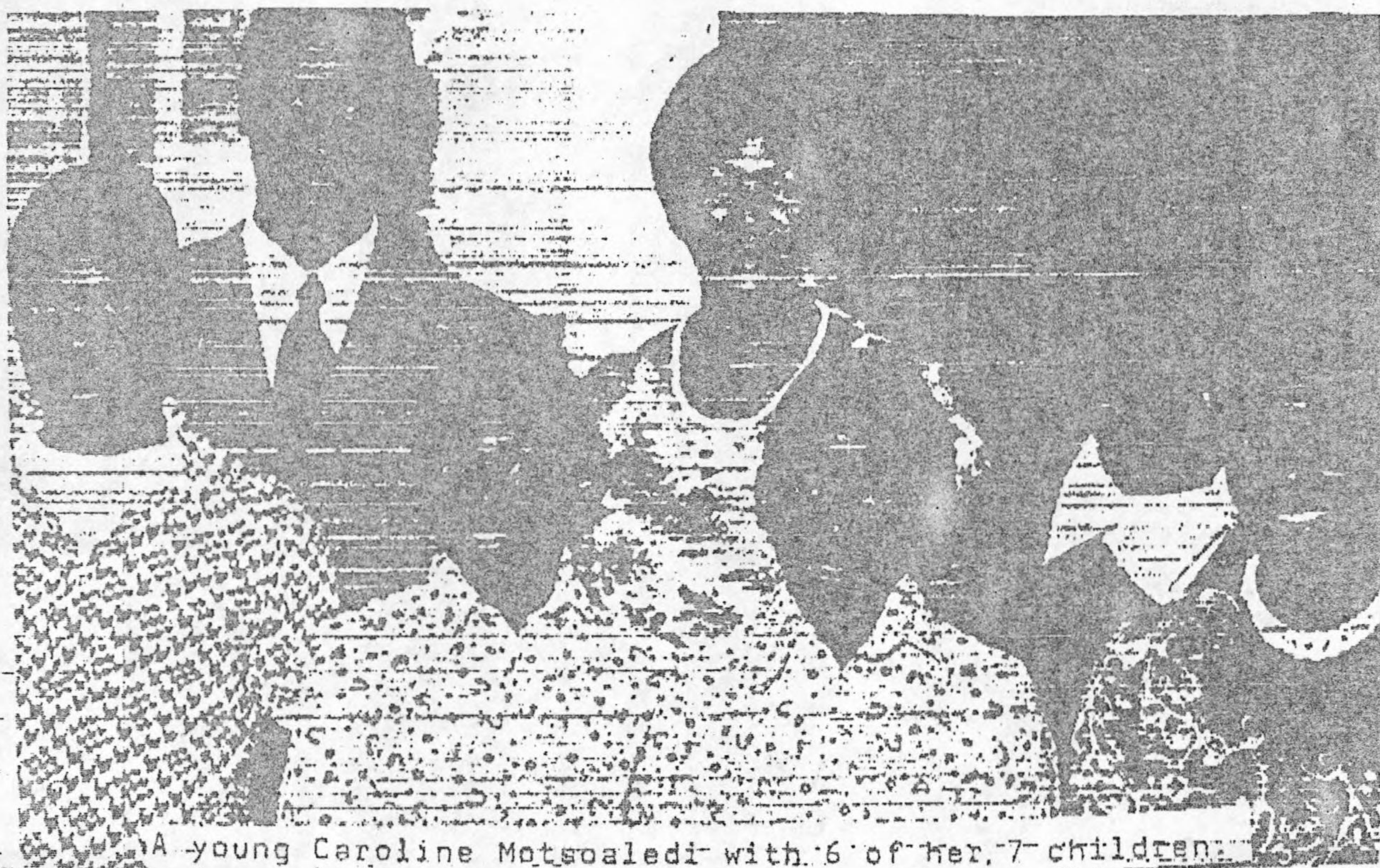
Poster of the Gaborone movement of the Phaporia

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At work in the clothing factory.

Caroline Motsoaledi has had to be a mother and a father to her 7 children since 1963 when her husband was arrested for treason. — Ma Motsoaledi is the wife of Elias who has spent the last 25 years in prison with Nelson Mandela, Ahmed Kathrada, Walter Sisulu, Wilton Mawani, Raymond Mhlaba and Comrade Mlangeni. The years of struggle to clothe, feed and educate her children has not left her a bitter woman. She still works in a factory making clothes. Ma Caroline lives in Mzimhlope, Soweto.



A young Caroline Motsoaledi with 6 of her 7 children.

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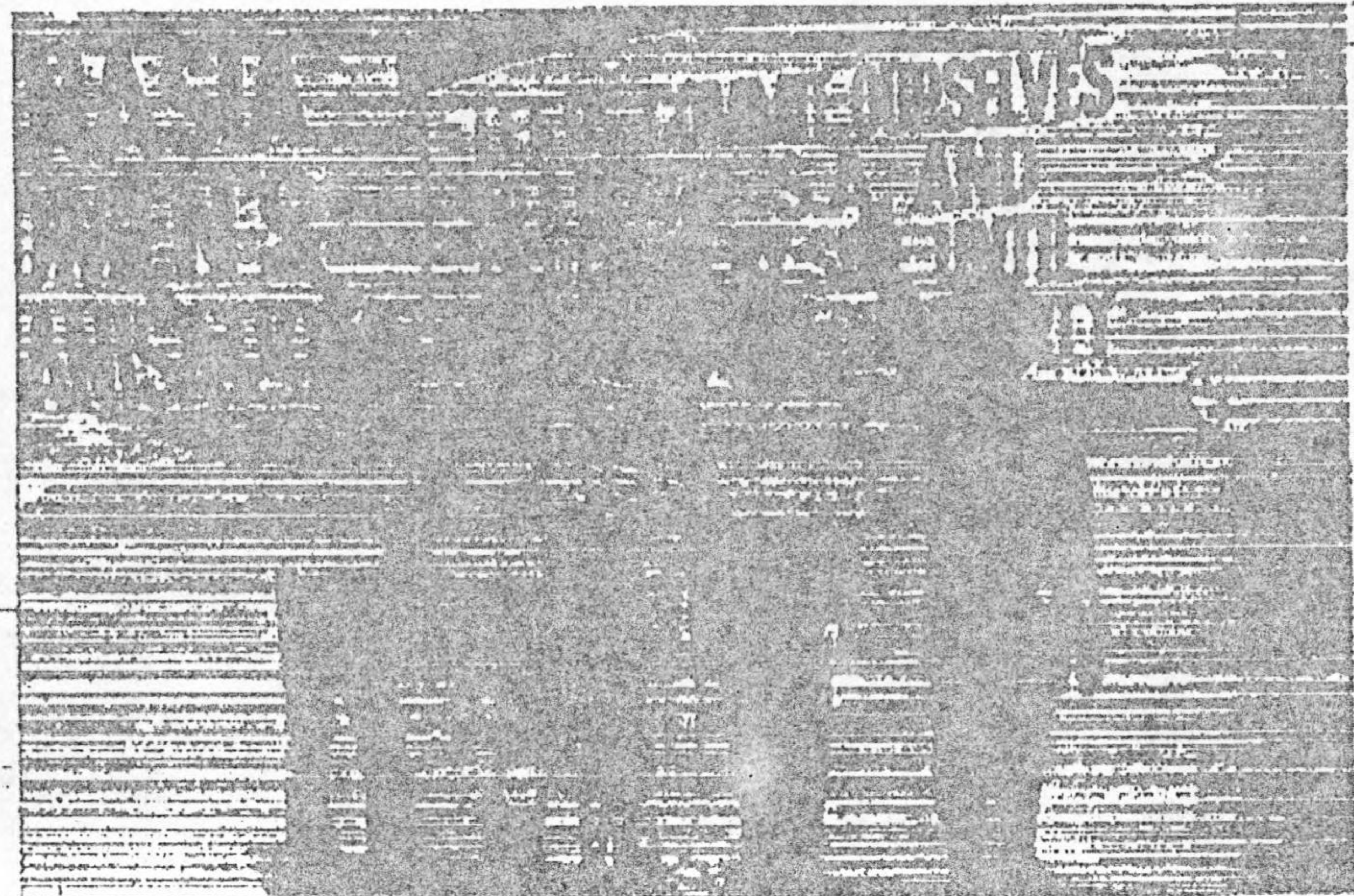
CHILD CARE CENTRE'S ARE OUR RIGHT AND THE STATE'S RESPONSIBILITY

Gone are the good old days when the father went to work and the mother stayed at home to take care of the children and the home. With the escalating cost of living and inflation running at 20%, many, many mothers are forced to go out to work to supplant the family income.

All these women who seek employment out of necessity are faced with the problem of Child care facilities. In the absence of any state child care centres in our areas, women become dependent on relatives, friends and in most cases, domestic workers who are already overburdened with household chores. Child minders also provide a very necessary service and many mothers with young children would not be able to go out to work if it were not for these women.

The existing nursery schools do provide an essential service but because they are private institutions, they are expensive and beyond the reach of many. As far as we are aware, there are 5 nursery schools in Lenasia all of which are run by religious institutions. They run on a half day basis between 8.00 a.m. and 12.30 p.m. working mothers either have to pay child minders for the rest of the day or once again depend on relatives, friends or domestic workers.

These facts clearly indicate the dire need for day care facilities incorporating creches and nursery schools. We say that it is the duty of the state to provide child care facilities at an affordable rate bearing in mind that many, many working women are mothers with young children who are directly contributing to the economy of the country.



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Aug 89 (11)

LEGAL RIGHTS UNDER THE NEW MATRIMONIAL PROPERTY ACT

The new matrimonial property Act No 88 of 1984 must be viewed as a major step forward in the evolution of women's legal and financial status. It brought about far reaching changes to the matrimonial property laws which have remained more or less unchanged for a very long time. It promotes women as an independent, motivated, and productive force of society and has entrenched the idea that marriage is a partnership. Moreover it has heralded an era where partners in marriage enjoy an equal status both in law and in the equal participation of the proprietary substructure of the partnership and it enables each partner to enter or leave the **DOOR OF MARRIAGE WITH DIGNITY, HONOUR AND GRACE.**

The most profound changes brought about by the new legislation are to be found with regards to the marital power and matrimonial property regime, more especially the introduction of the so called accrual system and New Concept Community of Property.

The pre 1984 matrimonial property system can be briefly summarised as follows :

1. The Traditional Marriage in Community of Property is where there is a common estate administered by the husband and which entitles both parties to an individual half share of all the property and profits gained in the common estate during the course of the marriage. It however, made the parties liable for the depths of the common estate.
2. A marriage out of community of property is achieved by the parties entering into an antenuptial contract prior to the marriage ceremony wherein they regulate their future matrimonial regime.

The limitations of the pre 1984 property system can be summarised briefly as follows :

- A. Marriages in community of property (subject to the husband's marital power)
 1. Secured some sort of financial advantage for women but it was coupled with;
 2. Legal disadvantages and especially legal disabilities subject of course to the provision of the matrimonial affairs act.
- B. Marriages out of community of property (marital power excluded)
 1. Secured equality in status between man and women in law to sign contracts or to litigate but it did not secure financial protection for either party.

THE MAIN FEATURES OF THE NEW MATRIMONIAL PROPERTY ACT NO 88 OF 1984 CAN BE BRIEFLY STATED AS FOLLOWS :

A. MARRIAGES IN COMMUNITY OF PROPERTY :

1. Marital powers is excluded
2. No restrictions on wives capacity to contract and litigate subject only to the provision that the consent of the other party is required in special circumstances.
3. Equal powers of administration of the joined estate.

B. MARRIAGES OUT OF COMMUNITY OF PROPERTY :

1. Exclusion of community of property and of profit and loss and inclusion of the new accrual system, this being a postponed sharing of the growth of each of the parties' separate estates during the course of the marriage.
2. Exclusion of community of property and of profit and loss but without any further direction, then the new accrual system will automatically apply.
3. Exclusion of community of property and of profit and loss and the exclusion of the accrual system or inclusion thereof but subject to special provisions.

The above is but a very brief summary of the pre 1984 and post 1984 matrimonial property system. However, even though the matrimonial property act has elevated women's status as a whole, on paper, the majority of South African Women do not have the knowledge or understanding thereof. This is directly related to the present regime in that the availability of a legal service is to a large extent inaccessible.

It therefore becomes the task of legal people in the mass democratic movement to consciously devise methods of simplifying and making available the necessary information. This process can only evolve through discussion, planning and active participation with the masses.

This page has been sponsored by Khan's Butchery

I HAVE SEEN THE RAYS OF OUR NEW SOUTH AFRICA RISING

You who have no work, speak.
You who have not homes, speak.
You who have no schools, speak.
You who have to run like chickens
from the vulture, speak.

Let us share our problems so that
we can solve them together.

We must free ourselves.

Men and women must share housework
Men and women must work together in
the home and out in the world.

There are no creches and nursery
schools for our children.

There are no homes for the aged.

There is no one to care for the sick.

Women must unite to fight for these rights.

I opened the road for you

You must go forward.

DORA TAMANA

WAKE UP PEOPLE

Wake up people and see what is happening to us.

Important decisions about our lives and future are being made

The cowards and sellouts want to become our leaders.

The people who have caused our ships to sink, now want to become captains.

Listen to people who have chosen the path of justice and elect them as your leader

— Why are we allowing the oppressors to have their way with us? —

If you fail to choose the path of truth and justice you will pay a bitter price

For when the day of reckoning comes,

then do not blame the all mighty for the seeds that you have sown

Why are you so afraid to stand for what is right?

Why is it that truth and justice is being side stepped?

With our revolutionary spirit and our freedom songs

other nations are responding to our call

The pillars of apartheid are being shaken

because the international community is now on our side.

SHAMA

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Issued by Lenasia Women's Congress, P O Box 708, Lenasia, 1820.