



Women work

J.F. Gamyuse

Designed, typeset and printed by
Lithosphere Printing Co-operative Ltd
203 Pentonville Road, London N1 9NF
Tel: 01-837 1174



FOCUS ON
AFRICAN
WOMEN
March, 1986

AFRICA CENTRE and AKINA MAMA wa AFRIKA
38 King Street
London WC2
Tel: (01) 836 1973

FOCUS ON AFRICAN WOMEN

CONTENTS

FOREWORD	2
Acknowledgements	3
THE AFRICA CENTRE	4
AKINA MAMA WA AFRIKA	6
INTRODUCTION: African Women in Struggle:	9
The Way Forward	
EQUALITY THROUGH STRUGGLE: African Women in Liberation	
Struggles:	
• South Africa	11
• Eritrea	15
• Namibia	17
STRENGTH IN TOGETHERNESS: African Women in Britain	
• the Cherry Groce Campaign	22
• ELBWO	24
• Forward	26
• Zimbabwean Women's Co-op (UK)	27
A CELEBRATION FOR WOMEN, MARCH 8-9, 1985	28
• African Women	
PROGRAMME OF EVENTS	42
Notes on Participants	47

FOREWORD

Over the last couple of years the Africa Centre has built up a healthy tradition of "FOCUS" programmes on particular countries or regions of Africa. We are proud to introduce a new kind of focus, on a particular subject, **African Women**. The timing of the focus is to coincide with International Women's Day.

Since at least one in every two Africans is a woman, we are conscious that one month is a short span of time to celebrate fully their achievements and understand their problems but I think the variety and intensity of the focus programme is a tribute to the hard work of our small staff together with the energy and enthusiasm of Akina Mama wa Afrika who have collaborated with us in preparing the focus.

I hope this booklet will also reach many people who cannot easily get to Covent Garden and encourage them to organize similar programmes elsewhere.

The Africa Centre would be happy to give any help it can to any such initiatives.

NIGEL WATT

Director

Focus on African Women Team

Jerusha Gituura Castley, Ruth Jacobson, Elizabeth Kanyogonya, Mabel Kiggundu, Wanjiru Kihoro, Sara Kyamanywa, Thandie Makiwane, Nish Matenjwa, Njeri Matenjwa, Christine Mukassa, Joyce Mutasa, Lauretta Ngcobo, Zabantu Ngocobo, Susan Odamtten.

Greater London Council



*At a meeting of the Greater London Council held at The County Hall, SE1
on Tuesday 20 December 1983 the Council adopted a*

DECLARATION

presented by the Greater London Council as an expression of its opposition to apartheid and its commitment to the cause of freedom in South Africa, to pay tribute to Nelson Mandela and all other prisoners of apartheid, and in recognition of the struggles and sacrifices of the African National Congress of South Africa and South West African People's Organization of Namibia and others to liberate their peoples.

The Council declares its abhorrence of the racist régime of South Africa and its illegal occupation of Namibia. The Council believes that the apartheid system of South Africa is an affront to human dignity and a threat to world peace and racial harmony.

In accordance with these views the Council will, within the limits of its legal powers, campaign to end all links between the Council and the apartheid régime of South Africa, utilizing all social, political, economic and legal measures that are at its disposal.

The Council hereby declares the Greater London area to be an 'Anti-Apartheid Zone' to complement its Anti-Racist Declaration, and undertakes in co-operation with the Anti-Apartheid Movement to discourage the people of Greater London from buying South African products, to organize appropriate events to publicize and implement the adoption of this Declaration and to encourage all other London boroughs to do likewise.



GLC
Working for London

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

THIS Focus on African Women would not have been possible without the financial, moral and other support of various organisations, women's groups and individuals.

We would like to thank **Christian Aid**, the **Commonwealth Foundation**, the **E.E.C. Development Education Fund**, **Camden Women's Unit**, the **GLC Alternative Arts** and the **GLC Ethnic Minorities Unit**, for financial assistance.

Many thanks to the **ANC Women's Section**, **Apples and Snakes**, the **Britain-Zimbabwe society**, the **Cherry Groce Campaign**, the **East London Black Women's Organisation**, **Dade Krama**, the **Foundation for Women's Health Research and Development**, the **National Association of Eritrean Women (UK)**, **NUBI**, the **PAC Women's Section**, **SWAPO**, **Wesley House** and **Zimbabwe Women's Co-op** for their co-operation in hosting an exciting, lively, and varied programme.

A number of individual women have also given their moral and financial support. We would like to thank **Elizabeth Cakuru**, **J. England**, **Naomi Griffiths**, **Ama Gueye**, **Greenham Peace Camp women**, **Rose Marney**, **Cassie McFarlane**, **Angela Mpofu**, and **Orah Siphika**, for generously responding to our appeal for assistance.

Many thanks to **Salome Asamoah**, women at **Aphra Videos**, **Micael Boncza**, **Ahmed Sheikh**, **Delia Jarrett-Macauley**, **Sarah Hughes**, **Erica Lawal**, **Anna Mackowiecka**, **Maggie Murray**, and **Maggie Pinhom** for their support, encouragement and solidarity.

Thanks to the **Uganda High Commission**, the **Zimbabwe High Commission** and **Uganda Airlines** for their assistance in various ways.

Colleagues at the Africa Centre have also contributed and provided support in various ways. We thank them all.

Thanks to our friends at **Lithosphere**, especially **Jim** and **Paula** for being so helpful and understanding.

Grateful thanks to all the participants in this Focus.

This Focus on African Women has been an attempt to show as many different aspects of African women's lives as is possible within a month and in a location far removed from the primary struggle in Africa. There has been an attempt to show the strength, courage, creativity and dynamism of African women and the very positive and invaluable contribution of the African woman on the continent and in the diaspora is making in the struggles of African people, for a new society. Finally we would like to pay special tribute to all peasant and working class women in Africa who in their daily struggles are a source of inspiration to us. The courage and sacrifice of the women of South Africa, Namibia and of women in other liberation movements is an encouragement to us.

This book and the Focus on African women is our very small act of solidarity with them and all those men and women who have given their lives for the struggle to liberate Africa.

WANYIRI KIHORO WANJIRU KIHORO TONY HUMPHRIES

Programme Staff

March 1986

The Africa Centre

The Africa Centre is an educational institute concerned with African affairs; a focal point for discussion of Africa; a meeting-place for Africans in London and for people interested in Africa. It is independent of any political or religious group but provides a platform for most non-racialist points of view.

It is located in the heart of the West End by the new Covent Garden Market, a few minutes from the main galleries, theatres, shops and government buildings. The Centre has an elegant eighteenth century hall once frequented by Garrick and Johnson and afterwards a famous auction room.

It was founded in 1962, and formally opened by President Kaunda of Zambia in 1964.

The Centre is self-financing from office rents, programme activities, and room hire. It is supported by some African governments and dependent on donations from charities, trusts and commerce.

The Centre is also used by students, teachers, returned volunteers, school-children, diplomats, politicians, writers and people from all parts of Africa.

Its activities include:

Cultural

1. Exhibitions: The visual arts Gallery has regular exhibitions of paintings, sculpture and craft work from Africa and the developing world.
2. Music: Groups from Africa and the black community in Britain often play.
3. Poetry readings: The best-known African and Caribbean poets.
4. Plays: Temba Theatre Company, Women's Theatre Group, Sassafras, Common Stock, the Lambeth Ensemble Theatre, Wazalendo Players '84 and many others.
5. Films: African films, sometimes with artistes present.

Development Education

1. Schools liaison: Links with schools are encouraged through occasional visits to schools, visits by schools parties, special programmes for schools, and answering queries from teachers and pupils.
2. One-day conferences: The Brandt Report, British Government Aid, Media Reporting on the Third World, Teaching African Literature and History, Militarization in Africa and many others.

3. Public lectures: Usually two talks a week on current affairs, art, welfare, history, anthropology, etc by well-known or specialist speakers.
4. Evening classes: Amharic, Shona, Swahili, African literature, women in Africa, African dance, Afro-Caribbean history etc.

Information Services

A small Resource and Information Centre can be consulted on the spot but the staff of the Centre welcome enquiries on all aspects of African life.

Social

Friday and Saturday evening discotheques and dances.

Hire

The Africa Centre facilities can be hired for private use – parties, receptions, book launchings, conferences, lectures, committee meetings etc.

Membership

Africa Centre membership brings you FREE admission to most meetings, and a discount on others, and a monthly newsletter AFRICA CENTREPOINT. Subscription £10 a year, students and unwaged £5.

African Cuisine

The Calabash Restaurant (01 836 1976) is open Mondays to Fridays for lunch (12.30-3pm) and dinner (6-11pm), and Saturday evenings. The chef selects dishes from every part of Africa. Try egusi with yam, targine with jollof rice, or nyama yo phika with eba, plus a North African wine, all reasonably priced. Drink in the Africa Bar.

Director: Nigel Watt

Reg Charity No.313510

AKINA MAMA WA AFRIKA

AKINA MAMA WA AFRIKA grew out of a group of African women who came together to organise a celebration on 8 and 9 March 1985 to commemorate International Women's Day. The group was then known as Africa Centre Decade for Women Group. The objects for which the Group was established are: to study, present, respond to and to act as a pressure group on matters that affect the mass of African people, especially women; to align itself to grassroots women – workers and peasants; to assist and support organisations and groups of African women in Africa; to carry out research on issues affecting African women; to address itself to issues that affect African women in the United Kingdom; to disseminate the results of such research and related publications; to represent the needs and opinions of the membership and to be a link between the membership and Black groups and organisations, charitable trusts, other voluntary or public bodies and government departments.

The Focus on African women is a milestone for our young organisation. It marks the first year of our existence and we are tremendously encouraged and strengthened by our modest achievements in the face of enormous hardships. The fact that we have struggled on and managed to organise a programme of such variety testifies to the strength and impetus that can only come about through our being organised as women. We have shared and learnt a great deal from each other.

With no money at all, and fully aware of what financial difficulties can mean to a small organisation, we committed ourselves to developing self-reliance. We in **Akina Mama** felt very strongly that human beings are the sole creators of wealth, therefore we put ourselves and our programme first and the question of soliciting funds second.

One of the ways in which we have raised money apart from membership fees is through percentage donations of our members. For example any of our members who runs a workshop or course donates a percentage of her fees to the organisation. We have also benefitted from our close relationship with the Africa Centre. We agreed on inception, that we would work closely with the Africa Centre and indeed any organisation that supported our aims and objectives. We have maintained our independence as an organisation but have managed to forge mutually beneficial links with others like the Africa Centre.

We are most grateful to the staff of the Africa Centre and especially the Director Nigel Watt, for their support.

Activities to date:

In the first year of our existence, we have concentrated mainly on getting the organisation off the ground. This means we have spent the time at most of our meetings on working on the constitution and legally forming the organisation.

We have also spent time identifying priorities for our attention. The tasks ahead of us as women living under quite difficult conditions in Britain are enormous. Often we have discussed a project enthusiastically only to postpone it due to lack of funds. We have also suffered a loss of active and valuable members who have either returned to Africa or have taken up other responsibilities. Despite these hardships, we have however managed to

accomplish a number of things. One of our members, although wearing a different organisational hat, attended the NGO Forum during the UN Conference for the Decade of Women in Nairobi and was able to make useful contacts with African women and some grassroots women's groups in Kenya.

Akina Mama had the honour to be invited to a working luncheon with Mozambique's First Lady and Cabinet Minister, Sêhora Grace Machel. The meeting had been called by the National Council of Women in Great Britain to discuss education with Mrs. Machel. We are in the process of affiliating ourselves to the National Council of Women of Great Britain.

Akina Mama has joined the African Grassroots Women's Network (AGRW Network). This has been as direct contact by one of our members who now has the responsibility of getting the Network off the ground.

Skill-sharing:

In addressing ourselves to our situation and the situation of African women in Britain, we felt that most of us had skills that we alone could share with other African and Afro-Caribbean women in Britain. To this end two of our members, one a novelist and the other a journalist, are running workshops in conjunction with Central Institute and Wesley House.

a) Writers Workshop: in February/March, Laretta Ngcobo, is running a writer's workshop intended primarily for African and Afro-Caribbean women first-time writers. This course will explore all the different aspects of writing: story, novel, character development, plot, style and working arrangements. Women will be encouraged to produce their own work for discussion. It is hoped that some published work will develop as a result of this course.

b) Skills for Radio Production: In April Jerusha Castley will be offering an 8-week radio production workshop. Compared to television and newspapers, radio is probably the cheapest and the most efficient means of communication. The skills needed to produce good radio programmes are not complicated. The course plans to introduce these skills to women. The course will include the use of tape recorders and microphones, interviewing and recording techniques, script writing for different radio programmes, production and editing.

Research:

We are currently involved in collecting oral narratives from African women in Britain. This will form the basis of a book and possibly a film documentary.

Future plans:

In keeping with our aim and objective of assisting and supporting organisations and groups of African women in Africa, we are working on an educational materials project. We hope to raise money for text books and other educational materials to donate to schools in Africa. One proposal is to start with Uganda.

We consider the task of documenting and highlighting issues of concern to African women, and of recording their achievements an important one. We are therefore hoping to work on a publication covering African women's issues on a local and international level.

We also hope to work with as many women's organisations as possible in Africa and elsewhere.

Membership:

Akina Mama is open to all African women and full membership fee is £12.00 a year. Membership for **Friends of Akina Mama** which is open to all other interested people and organisations is £6.00.

NUPE SAYS
DON'T
TRADE
WITH
APARTHEID

NATIONAL UNION OF
PUBLIC EMPLOYEES



INTRODUCTION

AFRICAN WOMEN IN STRUGGLE: The Way Forward

THE debate concerning the universal subordination of women has resulted in a myth, that the male-female contradiction is the most fundamental one. There are some in the feminist movement who believe that the battle to obtain equal rights with men within the limits of the capitalist world is a sufficient aim in itself. Some feminists consider men, who have unjustly taken all the rights and privileges for themselves, are the main enemy, and that victory will be the abandonment by the male sex of their exclusive prerogatives. Based on these assumptions, the universal subordination of women is seen as a conspiracy by men.

For us African women, the question we ask is has colonialism in the past and imperialism in the present been so generous as to put all our men in structurally dominant and better positions?

The assumption that women suffer identical oppression across the globe has led to the use of a superficial comparative method that blurs the vast inequalities and differences. Looking at the problem of women outside of the particular socio-economic context leads to false prescriptions and generalisations.

The primary reality of our African societies today is that of neo-colonialism which presents severe obstacles to us as African people. Neo-colonialism is the major obstacle to development in its human and broadest sense. So, while the problems which women face with respect to their positions in society are specific to them as women, most of the problems are common to all African workers and peasants in that our economies and their neo-colonial structures have failed to address themselves to the needs of the majority of our people. The problem for us then is not one of men being the oppressor and women being the oppressed. As Samora Machel says:

"The antagonistic contradiction is not between women and men but between women and the social order, between all exploited people, both men and women and the social order. The fact that they are exploited explains why they are not given tasks in society, why they are excluded from working out the concepts which govern economic social and political life, even when their interests are directly affected. This is the main feature of the contradiction: their exclusion from the sphere of decision-making in society."

If we look back into history and especially of struggles of African people against domination by imperialism, we see that the active participation of women in those struggles brought about significant change. Even colonial administrators like Sir Evelyn Baring in Kenya realised the importance of women when he suggested that the separation of the women participants from the struggle would effectively ensure its downfall. If we agree that women are the most oppressed sector of the society, it follows that the involvement of women in the frontline of the struggle is not only a necessity but a guarantee to

victory in the struggle for the total emancipation of oppressed sectors of society. The active participation of women in the struggle is crucial as it helps women to change their opinions about their potential and because it demonstrates to the men as well the falsity of traditional attitudes towards men.

We African women feel our subjugation and feel the need to change our situation. But the domination imposed by society by stifling our initiative, often prevents us from expressing our aspirations, and often prevents us from thinking how to wage our struggle.

This brings us to the question of the barriers and the major obstacles that stand in the way of the involvement of women in public life. The inferiority of women which is an accepted precept in most societies was reinforced, in the case of Africa, by colonial legislation and in some cases by foreign religious doctrines imposed on the African religions existing prior to foreign penetration. Practices like bride purchase, polygamy, attitudes against education and early marriages for girls tend to reinforce the disadvantaged position of African women. So there must be a struggle waged against the institutions and ideologies that reduce women to passivity and prevent them from struggling against their subordination.

The struggle to remove the barriers against women's full participation in all aspects of life have to be against both the system that maintains private property and the ideological and cultural mechanism that maintains women in subordinate positions and conditions them to accept their subordination.

It is necessary for the political consciousness of women to be raised, for women to participate in social production, for women to begin to receive a scientific and cultural perspective so that they would be able to fight the barriers that mentally oppress them.

Since the principal economic activity in Africa is agriculture and most agriculture is subsistence and done by women, development must be aimed at transforming this agricultural into organised, planned, collective agriculture. Women must be involved in communal villages, cooperatives and other forms of production.

There must be a strategy that requires the formation and adoption of an ideology of equality for real structural transformation. A strategy that calls for the development of strong social movements struggling for the equality of all people and the establishment of institutions that ensure the control of Africa's wealth and resources by African people. In this struggle, both African men and women will have to work together.

A new society based on principles of popular participation equality for women and the redistribution of wealth requires a creativity that can only develop in a context of self-reliance and true independence. It can only be based on a new vision of society.

African women can become truly free and equal only in a world organised along new social and productive lines. This does not mean that the partial improvement of women's lives within the framework of the capitalist system is impossible. Each gain of the working and peasant women represents a step leading human beings towards freedom and social equality. Each right that the African woman wins brings her nearer the defined goal of full emancipation.

WANJIRU KIHORO

EQUALITY THROUGH STRUGGLE: African Women in Liberation Struggles

THE WOMEN OF SOUTH AFRICA FIGHT FOR LIBERATION

WOMEN in South Africa have continuously played an important role in the national liberation struggle led by the African National Congress. The criminal apartheid system of white minority rule triply oppresses the majority of South African women. We are oppressed as blacks, discriminated against as women and exploited as workers.

As the people's resistance intensifies, the crisis of the apartheid regime deepens. It has lost even the pretence of legitimacy, and is only able to cling to power through escalating violence against the upsurge of popular resistance. The central focus of this resistance is the people's demand for a united, non-racial, democratic South Africa established on the principles of the Freedom Charter, declaring that '*South Africa belongs to all who live in it*', irrespective of colour or creed. The Freedom Charter was adopted in 1955 at the Congress of the People, the most democratic and representative gathering that had ever been held in our country. In the words of ANC president Oliver Tambo: '*The Freedom Charter contains the fundamental perspective of the vast majority of the people of South Africa of the kind of liberation that we, all of us, are fighting for ... Because it came from the people, it remains still a People's Charter, the one basic political statement of our goals to which all genuinely democratic and patriotic forces of South Africa adhere.*'

In the decades that have followed, the only reply of the South African regime to the people's demands has been increased brutality and repression. Twenty-six years ago on March 21 at Sharpeville, apartheid police opened fire on a peaceful crowd demonstrating against the hated pass laws, killing 69 people, most of whom were shot in the back. On the 25th anniversary of the Sharpeville Massacre, at Langa near Uitenhage in the eastern Cape, apartheid police gunned down at least 19 people, who were part of a crowd of people going to the funeral of other victims of police violence. Last year over 11,000 people were detained, martial law was introduced in many areas with the declaration of a state of emergency on July 21, and over 800 people were killed by the regime's armed forces which have literally occupied scores of black townships.

Every year about a quarter of a million Africans are jailed under the pass laws. Passes are a badge of slavery which the masses of South Africa are determined to destroy once and for all in 1986, declared by the ANC as the Year of Umkhonto we Sizwe, the People's Army. As women, we have a rich history of fighting against passes. This history confirms that our place today is at the forefront of the struggle, as it was 30 years ago when 20,000 of us marched on the Union Buildings in Pretoria to proclaim our hatred of colonial oppression through passes.

Women bear the brunt of apartheid, especially the genocidal policy of forced removals which has, in the past 20 years, uprooted nearly four million

black South Africans from their homes and dumped them in the destitute bantustans. Today women are swelling the ranks of the African National Congress and the people's army, Umkhonto we Sizwe, playing our part in all the structures of our movement, including the National Executive Committee. We know that it is only through people's war, combining intensified political mobilisation with escalating armed struggle that we shall rid our land of the scourge of apartheid.

We draw inspiration in our bitter fight from the heroic victories of our sisters on the African continent, won by fighting, arms in hand, side by side with their men, against the colonial oppressor. We take courage from our sisters and comrades-in-arms of SWAPO and the People's Liberation Army of Namibia, who are locked in fierce battle with our common enemy. We pay special tribute to the consistent solidarity from our African sisters – especially those in the independent African countries neighbouring South Africa and Namibia who have suffered directly the aggression of Pretoria. We know the sacrifices that accompany this solidarity can never be measured and we pledge that we will do our part to free our continent of the crime against humanity, the apartheid system.

We feel that the choice of March 1986 for the 'Focus on African Women' at the Africa Centre is especially appropriate because on the 8th of March we celebrate International Women's Day. The unity of freedom- and peace-loving women which this day expresses is greatly valued by the fighting women of South Africa. We are confident that women throughout the world will continue to support our just struggle; to campaign for total sanctions against apartheid and the complete isolation of the Pretoria regime internationally.

The spirit of militancy of the women of South Africa is exemplified by Winnie Mandela's recently published book, 'Part of My Soul'. Her husband, ANC leader Nelson Mandela, first jailed in 1962, was sentenced to life imprisonment in 1964. She herself has in the intervening years been banned, banished, detained and imprisoned. She nevertheless declares with supreme confidence: 'The fight for our country is a fight all the way and it is no longer a matter of any consequence to me where I fight from ... Through all these years I have never had any doubts that the day will come when Nelson will come out to lead our people with my brother Oliver Tambo.'

Countless other women have experienced detention without trial, long periods of solitary confinement incommunicado, and brutal interrogation and torture at the hands of the secret police. We appeal to women to save the life of Theresa Ramahsamole, a 24-year-old South African patriot on death row in Pretoria, and those of the five other Sharpeville residents sentenced to death with her after a sham trial in which it was revealed that the accused had all been tortured.

Send telegrams of protest to:

The Foreign Secretary
Foreign and Commonwealth Office
Downing St, SW1

The South African Ambassador
South Africa House
Trafalgar Square, WC2

P W Botha
Union Buildings
Pretoria
South Africa 000



Woman freedom fighter

BLACK SOUTH AFRICAN WOMEN'S ROLE IN THE STRUGGLE FOR AZANIA

THE Women's Section of the United Kingdom Branch of the Pan-Africanist Congress of Azania (South Africa) is a part of the Azanian Liberation movement. It therefore pursues the same aims and objectives as the Women's Section of the PAC at its exile headquarters in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, which can be summarised as the promotion of the welfare of refugees and other exiles from South Africa.

It came into being in 1981, and its chief concern is to participate in the liberation struggle of the oppressed people of South Africa. Immediate activities involve child care, including pre- and post-natal care, nutrition, preventative and curative care, formal and informal education, and cultural pursuits such as language development through story telling and the reading of story books. It also promotes knowledge of African customs and traditions.

In the United Kingdom the PAC's Women Section has devoted much of its energies to the collection of clothing and its shipment to refugee transit camps in the frontline states, a task which involves fund-raising and organisational hard work by people who also have to look after the upbringing of their own families in exile conditions. For this and other reasons it is anxious to make contact with similarly oppressed women based in other countries in order to share their experiences.

At present its ambition is to raise enough funds to launch a publication that will promote the cause of the Azanian liberation movement from the PAC's point of view. There is a dire need for such a publication in view of the blatant manipulation of news at the international level, often done at the expense of the oppressed Azanian masses. This is the biggest single project now receiving attention, and the assistance of well-disposed individuals and organisations will be appreciated.

In the past twelve months were two separate events of far-reaching historical significance which highlighted the role played by women in the Azanian liberation struggle. One was the death of 36 year old Boniswa Ngcukana, a woman guerilla fighter who was killed at the frontline of battle together with five of her male compatriots. She became the first Azanian woman to be killed as a guerilla fighter.

The six were a contingent of the Azanian People's Liberation Army which had created a forward base a Quacha's Nek, on the border between the Kingdom of Lesotho and the Transkei, the first of South Africa's Bantustans. On March 10, 1985, the six were surprised and killed in tragic circumstances by the para-military forces of Leabua Jonathan, then Prime Minister of Lesotho. It was reported that they were mistaken for Jonathan's opponents from the Lesotho Liberation Army.

The second event was the first death sentence imposed on an Azanian woman in connection with her political activities inside South Africa. Theresa Chabane Ramashamula, aged 24, was convicted and sentenced to death together with five male co-accused in Pretoria on December 13, 1985. The trial arose from the killing of a collaborator when the current unrest in South Africa first broke out at Sharpeville and the outlying areas (the Vaal Triangle) early in September 1984.

A campaign to save the lives in being launched by various organisations in Britain, and several Members of Parliament have received letters urging them to press for Government action in the matter.

The PAC Women's Unit can provide full information about this case and hopes that as many individuals and organizations as possible will campaign on this issue.

The Women's Unit of the United Kingdom Branch of the Pan-African Congress can be contacted during office hours at 01 802 3838. Otherwise it can be contacted at either 01 904 7762 or 843 2492.

THE NATIONAL UNION OF ERITREAN WOMEN (NUEWmn)

THE National Union of Eritrean Women (NUEWmn), from its foundation in 1979, has been diligently working on the issue of Eritrean Women. It has been making every effort to organize Eritrean Women both inside and outside the country. It has been conducting a persistent struggle:

- to realize full participation of women in the ongoing national struggle to eliminate Ethiopian colonialism and establish a free and democratic nation in its place (action taken by conducting political sessions, seminars, group discussions etc.)
- to mobilize women to raise their cultural level and eradicate illiteracy.
- to raise women's technical skills - starting with elementary technical training such as sewing.
- to improve women's social conditions by conducting courses on health care.
- to ascertain that women participate in the land reform and re-distribution programme to have their own land and encourage them to form small cooperatives.
- to ascertain that women have a say in the decision making bodies of the community and their active participation in the people's assemblies.
- to assist the Eritrean Women who have been forced to leave their country and seek refuge abroad to alleviate the various social, cultural, psychological and other problems they face in the host countries.

The NUEWmn is working actively among women in all parts of Eritrea, in the Middle East, in Europe and in North America.

Although members do make contributions and carry out various fund raising activities, it has not been sufficient to meet the financial requirements that our Union needs to carry out its activities and implement its various programmes. So the NUEWmn has been relying in part on the financial support of developmental, humanitarian and women's organizations. The understanding of our difficult situation by such organizations and the financial assistance that has been forthcoming is really encouraging. Thanks to such generous assistance, we have been able to modestly resolve some of the basic problems of the Eritrean Women and make known their plight to a number of organizations and to a larger public.

One of the basic problems that our women fighters, and the women in the refugee camps, peasant and nomad women under the care of the EPLF faced was the supply of sanitary towels. A campaign to buy Sanitary Towels Producing Machine was launched in 1981-82. Before this campaign, sanitary towels were produced manually by fifty women using 6 sewing machines working day night to meet the needs of the above mentioned group of women. Considering the terribly hot climate under which they had to work (50°C) and the lack of adequate material, it is not difficult to imagine that the output would barely meet only a small fraction of the needs, apart from the fact that it was unsafe for the health of women when produced manually.

So, the initiative to buy this machine was taken, and thanks to the generous help given by humanitarian organizations and the special contributions made by branches of NUEWmn abroad, the target was accomplished and the purchase of the machine realized.

The machine is at the moment operative. Due to lack of some parts and raw materials, however, it has not been fully productive.

The NUEWmn once again is obliged to look upon humanitarian and developmental organizations for financial assistance for the purchase of raw materials so that the requirements of the 100,000 most needy women (for whom the purchase of the machine was targeted) be met.

The NUEWmn, therefore, urgently appeals to your generosity. Please give a donation for the purchase of the raw materials. Thank you.

ISLINGTON COUNCIL WOMENS COMMITTEE Presents for
International Women's Week:

An Evening of Solidarity with the African National Congress Women's Section

SOUTH AFRICAN WOMEN AGAINST APARTHEID

Speakers from SWAPO and ANC and a film

Bring a gift for the ANC School

March 10, 7:30pm

Islington Town Hall, Upper Street N1

Baby Sitting allowances provided

AN ISLINGTON WOMENS HEALTH FAIR

Stalls and Workshops:

40 organisations offering information about your health

Saturday, April 19th

Manor Gardens Health Centre, 6-9 Manor Gardens, Holloway Road N7

10:00 - 4:30pm

Interpreters, signer, creche, cafe, access. If you need transport contact the Women's Committee Support Unit.

ISLINGTON WOMEN'S DIRECTORY

A booklet of services for and of interest to Islington women

Available free from Women's Committee Support Unit at the end of March
for more information phone 01/354/7133

**SPEECH BY PENDUKENI KAULINGE - SECRETARY GENERAL OF
SWAPO WOMEN'S COUNCIL, MEMBER OF THE CENTRAL
COMMITTEE OF SWAPO OF NAMIBIA AND HEAD OF SWAPO
DELEGATION TO THE UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE FOR
WOMEN - 24 July 1985**

**MADAME PRESIDENT,
DISTINGUISHED DELEGATES,
COMRADES AND FRIENDS,**

Allow me on behalf of my delegation to first of all congratulate you on your election as President of the World Conference to review and appraise the achievements of the United Nations Decade for Women. We have no doubt that under your able leadership the conference will achieve satisfactory results which will help women to continue their long march to emancipate themselves.

Madame President, I would like to draw your attention to the fact that, while this very important and historic conference is taking place here, there are thousands of women and children still languishing under colonial discrimination and racial oppression only 3,000 miles away from here. In saying so, I am trying to inform this august gathering that, to us the women of Namibia, the themes of the Decade which are Equality, Development and Peace went unnoticed, Namibia, a country of 1½ million inhabitants is occupied by 100,000 South African troops, plus locally recruited soldiers of the so-called South West Africa Territory Force. This represents a ratio of one armed racist soldier for every twelve Namibians. Such a high number of troops is in itself a manifestation of the absence of peace in that African country. Our people including in particular, women and children, are victims of foreign occupation and colonial oppression.

Madame President, time and again the Namibian people led by SWAPO, the Namibian Council of Churches, Amnesty International, have always been informing the international community about the plight of a Namibian woman under South African illegal and colonial occupation. Namibia, as I am speaking here, is Balkanized by the racist regime with a view to continue using some parts of our country for strategic military purposes and for continuous destabilization of independent African states in the region, particularly the People's Republic of Angola, even after Namibia is free. The attempt to cut off the Caprivi Strip from the rest of the country by the Botha regime is a manifestation of the dangerous move. The north, north-east, and north-central parts of Namibia have been under martial law since 1972, reinforced in 1981. Curfew is effective from 6pm to 6am the following day. The occupying colonial troops are ordered to shoot on sight whatever is moving at night. As a result, many women in particular, have lost their lives when trying to look for medical help in case of illness in the family or when in labour pains. Mortality rate during delivery is ever increasing. Whoever gets sick at night in the militarized areas has to wait until the following day if he/she has not died by then. The availability of health facilities and medicaments is another issue of grave concern to us. There are very few hospitals and clinics in Namibia. On many occasions patients die on their way to the hospitals.

Medical care in Namibia is used as a tool through which South Africa in a sinister way implements its policy of apartheid. Namibian women are subjected to forceful sterilization and are victims of Depo-Provera without their knowledge and consent. Immediately after delivery, irrespective of how many children a woman has, Depo-Provera is given to her in the form of an injection. Contraceptive use in Namibia is not for the purpose of spacing children one should have but is used as a way of reducing the number of Blacks in Namibia. I am saying so because white women are not treated in the same manner. They are in fact encouraged to have more children, with the regime subsidizing them. After delivery, white women are given additional money on top of their salaries, while Black women's maternity leave is unpaid.

Education in Namibia continues to be discriminatory and unequal between Blacks and whites. For this august gathering's information there is up to now not a single university in Namibia. Bantu education based on segregation continues to prepare Black Namibians for subservient positions in order to serve 'white supremacy' in perpetuity.

Contract labour system continues to deprive women of their husbands, who are forced to serve in the 'police zone' where Black women are prohibited by law to accompany their husbands. As a result, family ties are constantly broken and undermined. Unemployment is rampant and as a result poverty and disease continue to threaten the wellbeing of our people. Namibia is rich in terms of the abundance of natural resources. But the profits and other material benefits from this wealth are enjoyed exclusively by the racists and the major capitalist countries and their transnational corporations. Uranium mining in Namibia being carried out by the British Rio Tinto Zinc, is causing irreparable damage to the health and safety of our people as well as endangering the gene pool of the present and future generations of Namibians, owing to the radioactive contamination of the ecology and the environment.

Madame President, there is no way our women could fulfil the three themes of the Decade – Equality, Development and Peace – while our country is still under the illegal colonial rule of racist South Africa and as long as Namibia's wealth is stolen by foreigners. Our people have no say in their day-to-day economic, political, social or cultural affairs. Despite the international community's demand for the Namibian people to be able to exercise their right to self-determination and independence, the racist regime continues to defy all the resolutions of the United Nations on Namibia, including Resolution 435 (1978) of the Security Council, which calls for free, fair and democratic elections under the supervision and control of the United Nations. Instead, the racist regime of South Africa is still bent on dividing Namibia into mini-Bantustans or so-called homelands with a view to imposing neo-colonialist state in Namibia. This has been demonstrated last month on the 17 June when the racist regime in Pretoria installed a so-called Interim Government in Namibia. The presence of high officials from West Germany, Britain and other western states at the forefront is a manifestation of their collusion with the apartheid regime and underline their hypocritical attitudes these countries have been paying towards genuine independence and SWAPO, the sole and authentic representative of the struggling Namibian people.

A mass demonstration against this event by thousands of Namibians actively supported by SWAPO was brutally disrupted by a murder squad

known as 'Koevoet' (crowbar) unit. This notorious gang of murderers was ordered to intimidate, attack and kill the demonstrators. As a result 75 people, including women, were seriously wounded and admitted to Windhoek state hospital. To mention but a few women like Mrs Elina Ndupuka who was hospitalised with fractured arms, Mrs Taimi Edankjo who was hospitalised with a fractured leg and Mrs Christofina Andreas who suffered fractured arms and foot.

The racist regime of Pretoria, which is trying to prevent the Namibian people's march to freedom and self-determination has not only gone to the extent of Balkanizing the country into mini-bantustans but has also extended the so-called 'Defence Act' to Namibia for the purpose of conscripting all Namibian males from the age of 17-55 years into its racist colonial army. This clearly shows that South Africa is preparing Namibia for a civil war, whereby a brother will be killing a brother to the delight of the racist boers. This state of affairs should be exposed and condemned.

Madame President, given this grave situation it is difficult for us to talk about equality, development and peace, while our nation is still lodged in such a bitter colonial war forced on us by the racist regime of South Africa. We can only say we will continue to fight side by side with our menfolk in order to liberate ourselves from the yolk of colonialism, imperialism and reaction. At the same time, we are striving to reach a goal of emancipating ourselves as women.

It is a pity that some of the Western countries are still part and parcel of this oppressive and exploitative machinery in my country, through plundering of our natural resources and by using Black Namibians as cheap labourers to extract our minerals. The major western powers are all engaged in the continuing plunder of the Namibian natural resources, in total disregard of the resolutions of the United Nations Decree No 1 for the protection of our resources. President Reagan's administration terms South Africa its true ally and friend. The United States continues to help South Africa buy time at the expense of the blood and suffering of our people, by demanding and introducing unacceptable conditions over the independence of my country. The sickening linking of Namibia's independence to the withdrawal of Cuban Internationalist forces from Angola is nothing else but a defence of the illegal occupation of Namibia by the racist regime of South Africa. The Reagan administration knows that the Cuban presence in Angola has nothing to do with the independence of Namibia. Angola is a sovereign state and has, since its independence, been subjected to military attacks, destabilisation and subversion by the racist regime of South Africa.

We call upon the American people to know that the history of the Namibian people will never forgive those who participated in the process of our oppression and they should know that the blood of Namibian children and women is spilled for the sake of the interests of the Washington/Pretoria alliance.

However, we would like to commend the senators and representatives who introduced bills in Congress to impose sanctions and other punitive measures against South Africa. We call upon the government of the Federal Republic of Germany to drop its tendency and colonial hangover to re-colonise Namibia through sinister manoeuvres, instead to co-operate in

STRENGTH IN TOGETHERNESS: African Women in Britain

THE CHERRY GROCE CAMPAIGN

THE Groce Family Support and Community Defence Campaign came into being as a result of offensive action by the police. They were in search of Michael Groce allegedly in connection with a firearms charge, and the incident resulted in the shooting of Cherry Groce, mother of five whilst she was at home in her bed.

The tragic moment when P.C. Lovelock shot Cherry Groce, served as the ignition point for the Brixton community's frustration. The rage and indignation which ensued found expression on the streets. Various community groups participated in a series of meetings in an effort to gain control of the situation. The Cherry Groce Campaign was born of one such meeting.

Three principle demands were the working aims of the campaign:

- a) A demand for a public enquiry:
- b) A demand that P.C. Lovelock be arrested and charged with attempted murder.
- c) A demand that full and comprehensive compensation be made to Cherry Groce in the light of her injuries.

The first demand was dropped because people came to feel that the repetition of Lord Scarman's efforts in 1981 with the insignificant changes it has brought would be a futile exercise. We are, however, in the process of producing a report of our own.

The campaign, then, has worked and survived on the efforts and contributions of volunteers. This work includes the successful organisation of a peaceful demonstration which took place on the 11th November. It was marred only by a wave of arrests at Hyde Park tube station after the demonstrations had dispersed. The magnitude of the demonstrations coupled with its peaceful progress, served to restate the anger and unreset at the highly volatile policing methods employed in various black communities.

It was important to note that underplaying of this demonstration which went peacefully compared with the overplay by the media of the events subsequent to the shooting of Cherry Groce.

The campaign works closely with the Brixton Legal Defence Campaign who monitor court cases and legal queries of the people arrested on the 9th and 10th September 1985.

Our work involves raising funds for the Groce family, speaking at meetings up and down the country in an effort to keep people informed and to provide an update on current events affecting the campaign and Cherry Groce's future.

To date a report has gone to the Department of Public Prosecutions (D.P.P.) recommending that P.C. Lovelock be charged with wounding. We await the D.P.P.'s decision.

In the meantime the campaign continues, pickets have been organised outside courts and Kennington Police station which is P.C. Lovelock's base. (He is currently on leave with full pay!) A broadsheet is in the process of being produced.

Our aim is to campaign solidly until our demands are met. We would like to take this opportunity to thank all those that have given time, energy and monies to the Groce Family Support and Community Defence Campaign. We trust that in the end we shall, with your support move from strength to strength.

If you require further information, please contact us on tel: 01 326 1394 At 506 Brixton Road, London.

CLOVER GRAHAM/PAT AGANA/CECILIA PROSPER
Campaign workers

BREAK NEW GROUND ...

SPARE RIB is the only Women's Liberation Magazine available on newstands in Britain. In 60 pages monthly, it challenges the male 'experts' and explores issues ranging from health, parenting and creativity to women's struggles in Britain and internationally.

SPARE RIB is a forum for discussion, a celebration of women's achievements and an important resource for teaching and research.

... subscribe to

SUBSCRIPTION RATES

(Rates in brackets apply to institutions)

Britain & Ireland £10.50 (£16)

Europe & Anywhere Seamail £13 (£20)

Airmail: Middle East £17 (£25)

Airmail: Africa, N & S America £19 (£28)

Airmail: Far East, Australasia £21 (£30).

*Subscriptions from abroad must be paid in sterling international money orders. Send cheque/PO/money order to Spare Rib subs, 27 Clerkenwell Close, London EC1.

SPARE Rib

THE EAST LONDON BLACK WOMEN'S ORGANISATION

THE East London Black Women's Organisation (ELBWO) currently temporarily based at the Newham Parent's Centre, came together in May 1979. Coming together was because of a strong commitment by this group of African and Caribbean women who among other aims wished to re-establish the rights of Black women to meet together.

The international identity of ELBWO, comprising of African women from the Caribbean, the UK as well as Africa is recognised as an enriching experience, allowing Black women the chance to learn and to understand more fully what they have in common, and to see the artificial or social barriers which keep us apart as Black people and leave us isolated and vulnerable.

The cultural characteristics of having extended families and a social network for mutual support for instance is neither recognised nor accepted by mainstream British culture as a basic foundation for the support of the Black family and this neglect whether passive or active undermines African people's culture. This process of undermining is a part of a slave and colonial system which has been further aggravated by immigration. Immigration splits up families and more often than not breaks down support and communication between people. The need of labour in Western society push Black men and women to improve their economic changes in foreign countries. Because of their historical experiences, the women in ELBWO find that they share common concerns. Some are isolation, racism, sexism, and the lack of useful information in general. Black women encounter racism, and sexism in places of work (including the home), and likewise in areas of housing, childcare facilities, health, education, the law and other welfare services.

By discussing these common problems as African women, self help is inspired and the feeling of neglect minimised. Identification also leads to clearer definition of problems, aims and objectives as well as re-establishing cultural links which is a natural and normal part of social existence.

The group's work in 1984/85 highlights the results of this effort of working together and we very much hope that more women will participate in all the group's activities as part of the philosophy of the group that is, that prevention is more effective than cure.

Membership is made up of three different types: *Full* members for African women and women of African descent, with full voting rights and information. *Associate* members for women and men of African and African descent who share the aims and objectives of ELBWO and want to contribute and to attend group activities. Associate members have no voting rights. Attendance of men at ELBWO meetings by invitation only. *Friends/Supporters* anyone wishing to be informed of and involved in group's activities. Associate membership which includes Black men, reflects part of the ELBWO's aim which recognises the need for Black women and men (friends, husbands, sons, fathers, brothers, cousins) to work together. The racist and sexist experiences of both Black women and Black men do not allow the feminist perspective which rejects males.

We hold a Saturday School session during term time in one of the local halls. We have called the school SANKOFA which literally means to retrieve.

We feel that almost all of us have been mis-educated and therefore have a need to re-educate ourselves and our children. Everyone is both teacher and learner.

We are at present desperately seeking funds to purchase a building to house our centre and to provide a space for Black people in this area.

We provide an information/resource base: organise conferences on issues such as health, education, religion, film screening, workshops and bazaars. We are slowly building up a library which will reflect our cultural heritage.



African women walk long distances to fetch water

FOUNDATION FOR WOMEN'S HEALTH, RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT (FORWARD)

Aims

Our focus

- providing and supporting education and information for women
- assisting and supporting programmes of special benefit in improving the health and general well-being of African women and their children.

Background

FORWARD developed from a working group of African women set up under the auspices of an international human rights organisation – MINORITY RIGHTS GROUP in 1981 – to further education and information on socio-cultural related practices detrimental to the health of African mother and child.

FORWARD's greatest development during this period was introducing for the first time onto the agenda of the UN Human Rights Commission the issue of sexual mutilation of girls in Africa.

FORWARD became an autonomous non-governmental development agency in 1983.

Our activities

Lobbying – working with non-governmental groups with consultative status with UN to further action from governments on detrimental socio-cultural related practices which affect the well-being of women.

The Sister Programme – This is a development education programme aimed specifically at women in the developed world. Through this programme support can be channelled effectively to African women campaigning against circumcision of girls.

SISTER LINKS – a women's development quarterly gives an indepth insight into the lives of women and children in Africa and also provides an avenue for an exchange of knowledge and ideas between women in Africa and the rest of the world. Sponsors on the SISTER PROGRAMME receive the publication free. Thus FORWARD's Sister Programme means giving and taking in both directions.

Field Programmes

AFRICA

FORWARD is part of a network of groups in more than fifteen African countries (Inter African Committee on Traditional Practices IAC) campaigning on health issues. FORWARD has supported programmes in Egypt, Sudan, Kenya, Somalia, Gambia and recently in Ghana.

UK

a) **AFRICA MOTHER AND CHILD HEALTH CAMPAIGN** – This is a community based health education project supported largely by the DEPT. OF HEALTH. The campaign aims to strengthen networking between African women, providing a supportive health advisory service in particular bringing

health information against the practice of circumcising girl children to family level.

b) **AFRICAN WOMEN HEALTH LECTURE** – Series in its 4th week at Wesley House, a multi purpose women resouse centre in London.

c) **CAMDEN MAENDELEO PROJECT** – Research into the health needs of African women.

EFUA GRAHAM

Director

ZIMBABWE WOMEN'S CO-OP IN LONDON

THIS is a co-op organisation of 10 Zimbabwean women in London who, aware of the difficulties Zimbabwe women organisations experience in identifying markets for their products, particularly crafts etc. and also encounter in obtaining a fair price for these products decided to :-

Liaise with relevant women's organisations in Zimbabwe e.g. Zimbabwe Women's Bureau, with a view to exchange information on the intrinsic characteristics of the European market for crafts.

On this basis help Zimbabwe women's co-ops to rationalise production and quality control of their crafts.

Assist these organisations in marketing their products in Europe at prices that will guarantee a fair price to the women crafts arts, etc. makers.

To this end the Zimbabwe women's co-op in London will liaise with all individuals and organisations able to facilitate the marketing of Zimbabwe women's products.

JOYCE CHENZIRA MUTASA
Zimbabwe Women's Co-op in London

A CELEBRATION FOR AFRICAN WOMEN, MARCH 8–9, 1985

ON March 8 and 9, 1985 in commemoration of International Women's Day, a Celebration for African Women was held at the Africa Centre. This was a two-day event that featured films, talks, discussions, music exhibitions and events for children. It was an occasion to meet other African women and to celebrate the African woman in all her roles as mother, fighter, worker, artist, orator, peacemaker etc, and was funded by the GLC's Women's Committee.

There were talks on:

- What African women had achieved during the UN's Decade for Women;
- African Women in Britain;
- Linking up with oppressed people's struggles in Africa and in the Diaspora;
- How African women could struggle for peace and guarantee a future for their children.

Speakers included: Dr. Tsehai B. Selassie, Efua Graham, Jerusha Castley, Annie Mubanga, Tandie Makiwane, Wanjiru Kihoro and Lauretta Ngcobo.

Merle Collins from Grenada read her poems and Amandina Lihamba presented a tape-slide on East African Women.

The African Dawn held a music workshop for children and children's stories were told by women from the Organisation of Nigerian women; Jerusha Gituura; Lauretta Ngcobo; Chenjerai Shire; Pitika Ntuli and Ngugi wa Thiong'o.

The following section carries some of the talks and discussions from the event. What the two-day celebration indicated quite clearly was the need for more fora for African women to meet and discuss issues of common interest.



From left to right: Wanjiru Kihoro, Jerusha Castley, and Thandie Makiwane

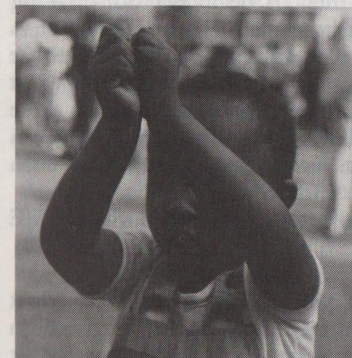


Lauretta Ngcobo

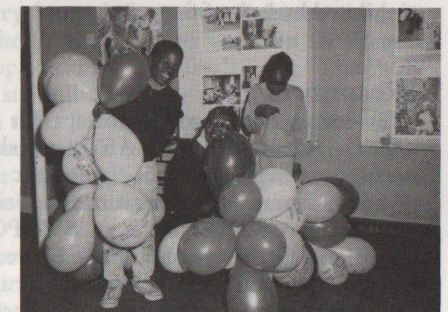
SAME BUT DIFFERENT

*My friend and I
travelled home together
by nightbus
My friend is white
As we parted at the station stop
She said
that her fears
were of rapists
and robbers
for me
that too
but as I walked the distance home
on pounding tiptoe
each sudden shadow
was a threat
of the National Front.*

Merle Collins



Some of the children on International Women's Day, 1985



WOMEN IN DIALOGUE

AFRICAN governments have made laws saying that African women are equal to men. So women in Africa have all the legal rights, but how these laws are implemented and translated into practice has been the question for those women who have been thinking and working over the Decade. The line of thinking of these women has been ad hoc. Organisations have been set up by the UN e.g. The African Training and Research Centre for Women which is within the UN Economic Commission for Africa. This Centre has been organising conferences inside Africa, bringing women from different African countries together to discuss their problems, their role within their countries and their role in agriculture, in technology in urban areas. Within African universities, women too have been writing books and articles addressed mainly to the literate outside world – but addressed to women worldwide.

What achievements these regionally based conferences and independent university writers have had remains to be assessed in the future. One thing can however, be said about the regionally based conferences. They have created some sort of nucleus of activity in various African countries where none would have existed. Independent African women's organisations are few and far between inside Africa itself. The only thing that can be said is that there is an African Women's Association for Research and Development based in Dakar, and a few attempts have been made in European capitals by African women to create a dialogue among themselves. Overall it has been very difficult for African women inside Africa itself to meet together independent of what their national governments or the UN can provide for them. Inter-regional communication has been minimal but some start has been made, and that in itself is positive.

What all this dialogue has identified is the importance of women in subsistence agriculture and the need for women to be in decision-making positions. In socialist countries, this need has become very important but in other countries the organisations which are established to address those questions have remained only as structures to support the state system. What about African women outside Africa? Have they remained in touch with these developments inside Africa? There has been communication between women's organisations outside Africa but direct networking has been inhibited by lack of finance.

DR. TSEHAI B. SELASSIE

Responses

The issues raised are important for African women outside Africa. Most African women outside Africa are skilled professionals, so they have been concerned with political, economic and social problems of Africa. Most African women's organisations in Britain are within structures organised by men, out of necessity e.g. SWAPO Women's Organisation, the ANC Women's Organisation and the Eritrean Women's Organisation. All these are within the structures of political struggles, and look at the overall political problems of their own countries. They do not necessarily address themselves solely to women's issues.

AFRICAN WOMEN AND THE UN DECADE FOR WOMEN

WHAT are African women's achievements over the Decade? Let us re-state our concerns, and in particular, the Preamble to the International Convention of the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women, by the UN which almost all the countries of the world have adopted since 1979. This convention notes that:

"The charter of the UN re-affirms faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, and in equal rights as men and women: the universal declaration of human rights affirms also that all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights, and that every one is entitled to these freedoms and rights without distinction of any kind, including distinction based on sex."

One aspect of this is that the state parties to the International Convention of Human Rights, have the obligation to ensure the equal rights of men and women, to enjoy all the economic, social, cultural, civil and political rights. These would have been the aims of women all over the world at the beginning of the UN Decade for Women – to re-assert their position in relation to these Conventions. However, global estimates by mid-1980 coming from the UN report notes that women, just under half the human race, own 1% of land, property and resources, receive 10% of the earned income, yet they labour for 16 out of every 24 hours. In Africa, there is no description for the desperation of African people particularly women and children. Any analysis of what we have achieved has to be put in the context of the present situation of women and children in Africa. At independence, women got rights e.g. the right of women to have equal pay with men if we do the same work and the right to vote. Many of the rights gained have remained at best token rights. Over the Decade, the middle class women – educated women – have done very well, thank you! Many of us have had the chance to go to the university; some of us in Europe and we have even made our voices heard internationally. But the 99% of women in rural areas have lost out and 20 years after independence we can look back and see that the situation of women has really worsened.

African women perform between 60–80% of agricultural work, yet are neglected in terms of agricultural training, access to resources, credit loans, and tractors to expand their agricultural input and these are the farmers in Africa. African women still work very long shifts up to 16 hours a day – getting up around 4am to attend to the family and also work on the farms. Women still travel for long distances up to six miles to fetch water. They still use very crude instruments and there are still no labour saving equipment to help ease their work load. Apart from that, the best part of the land in many places in Africa is still very much focused on cash cropping. Even the land that women used to grow food to feed their own families, is no longer available to them. Women have been pushed to the fringes where they have to subsist on unproductive land.

On education, it is reported that over 84% of women in Africa are illiterate. This has serious implications for child care e.g. issues like malnutrition where there is a clear link between educational level of mothers and the health status of children.

Education helps women acquire a broader world outlook enabling them to challenge certain aspects of traditions and cultures which tend to oppress and affect women's lives. Not to mention its implications for the health status of African women. In the West, maternal mortality rate is about 30% in a hundred thousand of women giving birth; but in Africa, this rises to over 1,000 per 100,000 births. This high maternal mortality rate is a result of several factors e.g. lack of access to modern health care but also women's low social status can aggravate the situation.

One of the concerns of women's health that I have been involved with in the last few years, has been the issue of female genital mutilation. Today, we still have thousands of our little girls being subjected to this practice in some parts of Africa. The most severe forms of excision and infibulation impose greater threats to the health status of young girls, and mothers.

Today we have very few women in the modern political decision-making processes in Africa. In parts of Southern Africa, even the basic right of citizenship is not recognised and women are under triple oppression. Whereas we can have been a few women moving up in various occupations, the greatest number of women in Africa have not realized any of these goals. In fact, I would not be surprised if 99% of women in Africa have not even been aware that there has been this UN Decade for Women, and that women have had the right to stand up and fight for our rights.

In general the major gains for African women over the decade has been definition of the increasing focus on women which has assisted in shedding light on the depressed situation that women in Africa find themselves and in particular for development planners to seek for another development with women and the poor.

At a conference in Senegal 1982 the Association for African Women for Research and Development (AAWORD) formulated several forward-looking strategies. These strategies called for a development process which would involve a radical, socio-economic and cultural transformation which would create a basis for genuine changes, for both men and women, and in particular the way that men and women relate to each other and to society.

EFUA GRAHAM

AFRICAN WOMEN REFUGEES IN BRITAIN

BRITAIN like any other country signed a convention to say that they will accept refugees from anywhere. When it comes to accepting refugees, that is a different issue which involves racism. The majority of women from Africa who are in Britain have come as refugees; they have come from Ethiopia, Eritrea, and South Africa, and a few from Uganda, Somalia and other places. The reasons why they came to Britain were that they were misled. They thought that Britain was a multiracial society where they would be accepted, where they would be offered education and in the hope that when their countries have settled down, they can go back and have employment opportunities. When the women arrived in this country, they had problems because not only was it difficult for those who had families, because they were isolated from their host community. The British women did not want to know about them. It has been very difficult to go back home, so there is a dilemma for the African woman.

African women are like an invisible group. In Britain there are over 20,000 African women and the majority of the refugees who are coming are women. They come as 'au pairs' – working for Arab families, they work and live in the house, they have no time to attend classes or anything; they find themselves in the same trap as they came 10 years later. They haven't advanced, their status has not changed; if anything their situation has got worse; because expectations from home is also different.

There are a lot of 'invisible' people in London. What can we do for these women? Each one of us can offer a helping hand in terms of information; the way the information is distributed in this country makes it difficult for those who cannot speak English, and do not know where to go for information. Therefore these women do not get the information they need because they do not know the system. A lot of people get intimidated. People in this country have patience to listen to those who speak with a Scottish accent, for example, but you speak with a Zambian accent – or any other African accent and they have no time for you. We must all give a helping hand otherwise these women refugees will be in the same situation 15-20 years later – or their situation could even get worse.

ANNIE MUBANGA

RESPONSES

- 1) African refugees are always questioned by immigration, and are often sent back to their countries, yet Polish refugees are not sent away.
- 2) Women who come here as refugees have talent and want to advance; but few opportunities are open to them because they are always expected to remain as refugees.
- 3) African men and women have been here for hundreds of years and they do not see themselves as invisible. Personal and institutionalised racism is not new – and black men are at times more oppressed than women.
- 4) Sometimes in trying to go back into history, we tend to gloss over present, current problems. Black men are not more oppressed than black women. If you have children, are locked up in the house often in a council flat and there is no possibility of a child minder because one is removed from one's extended family – one can be very isolated. Most African men here are students and go out and mix with other people but the women stays at home.

US MILITARY INVOLVEMENT IN KENYA: EFFECTS ON WOMEN

KENYA, once self-sufficient in food production, has been experiencing acute food shortages in recent years. Despite a bumper harvest in 1978-79, the country was on the verge of starvation in 1980. The president was forced to make several trips abroad in search of assistance and the USA came to the rescue. In the same year, Kenya secretly signed the Facilities Access Agreement with them.

This agreement granted the use of the port of Mombasa, airport facilities at Embakasi in Nairobi, Wajir in northern Kenya and Nanyuki, where a huge amount of money has been spent to build underground facilities.

The US spent more than \$50m dredging the harbour to enable the huge aircraft carriers to turn around and the port has now been sufficiently expanded to take in the largest of the US's nuclear powered carriers, the USS Nimitz. Kenya's hospitals and entertainment facilities are valuable to US naval forces assigned to the US Central Command (USCENTCOM), the former US Rapid Deployment Force.

In 1982, 32 US combat and support ships docked at Mombasa. There are reported to be more than 3,000 US sailors in Mombasa at any one time and Kenyan police, intelligence and security agents work hand-in-hand to maintain tight security and crack down on drug traffickers.

Prior to 1980, Kenya was the only East African Indian Ocean state to allow the US overflight and landing rights and navy port calls. The June 1980 Facilities Agreement formalised this arrangement as an integral part of the US effort to bolster its military presence and deployment capability in the Indian Ocean region.

Kenya is of strategic importance because of her 50 mile coastline, along the Indian Ocean and Mombasa plays an important linkage role with the facilities at the Diego Garcia base. US forces in the region are reportedly equipped with nuclear weapons. It is also reported that nuclear weapons have been brought to the US strategic base at Diego Garcia and that manoeuvres in the area have involved US B-52 bombers that can carry nuclear weapons.

Apart from the nuclear threat looming over the lives of 19 million Kenyans, the local Kenyan population, especially women, has already suffered from the presence of US troops in Kenya.

The Moi and Reagan regimes have been at great pains to deny that the facilities granted the US include bases. They insist that they are only for 'rest and recreation' for US sailors. This in itself has meant the most ruthless abuse and exploitation of Kenyan women. Prostitution and drug trafficking has increased tremendously. This has brought profits for some people, but for a section of Kenyan women it has meant rape, battering and even murder at the hands of US servicemen. In 1980, Monica Njeri was murdered by US sailor Frank Sundstrom. He was set free on a six month good behaviour bond of £25. In 1983, another US sailor, James Tyson, was charged with the murder of Lucy Kabura. He was freed three months later. The public outcry and international exposure of these two cases led to a government clamp-down on the further coverage of any incidents involving US servicemen.

The granting of military bases to the US, and thereby surrendering sovereignty over part of Kenya's territory, was a logical step to the policies adopted by the independent neo-colonial rulers. These policies are geared towards making Kenya attractive to foreign investment and exploitation, and emphasise the need for stability and security from 'hostile' forces. These policies have led to Kenya embarking on a heavy militarism programme supported and financed largely by the USA.

In the 1970s, Kenya became one of the top five African recipients of US military aid through the International Military and Education Programme (IMET), when it was receiving about £2.3m per annum.

The Economic Support Fund (ESF) is linked to agreement for US military access to base, port and airfield facilities. Kenya received £4.2m in ESF in 1984, a four-fold increase since 1982. The US Congress agreed to this large amount because it was argued that, *'Kenya is a country with which we have a co-operative relationship and whose stability is important to our strategic interests in this region. In the aftermath of the attempted coup of 1st August 1982, the government of Kenya requested an increase in economic assistance in order to help it deal with the economic problems that create conditions for political unrest.'*

Kenyan women have played an important role in protest. It was ordinary women who led the national outcry against the murder of Kenyan women by US marines. Peasant women have been known to lead attacks on corrupt land company officials and corrupt officials in the co-operatives. Women have led demonstrations against police harassment of street traders in the city. At the height of the repression in 1982, a Kenyan woman was brought to court with a one week old baby facing charges of 'publishing a seditious publication' because of a paper she had written condemning the repression in Kenya. On 1st January 1984, the wives of political prisoners and detainees held a vigil that was attended by more than 100 people.

When Maina wa Kinyatti was sentenced to six years in prison, the crowds of peasants and workers, mainly peasant women, burst into song:

'Too much cowardice

Only perpetuates poverty in the land

It is better to die in struggle

Than to live as a slave in silence

The unity

of us workers and peasants

Together with our revolutionary courage

Will liberate Kenya from imperialist slavery'

Police charged into them but had a hard time dispersing the crowd of women from the court corridors.

WANJIRU KIHORO

RESPONSES

1) This problem of military bases is not confined only to Kenya. Mobutu in Zaire has given France bases, the US wants bases in Zulu homelands. Unfortunately, we in Africa are voiceless. Our national governments silence those who want to discuss the issue.

Question: How much is the UK involved?

A. In Kenya there are at any one time over 600 military personnel. They are mainly stationed in North Kenya. They are supposedly there to build roads and bridges. This is a result of an agreement signed between Britain and Kenya in 1964.

During the 1982 coup attempt, it was reported that RAF officers were flying Kenya Air Force planes. Very little information is given by the government under the pretext of a 'threat to national security'.

2) The question of racism is important. We live in a small world because we have a common enemy – nuclear war.

3) There is no true merging of cultures if one is oppressed. It is a fallacy to say that before colonialism, sexism did not exist in Africa. Unity can only come if African men accept that women can organise themselves if they wish, and if white people accept that black people can organise themselves.

4) Africans are the only people whose survival to the 22nd Century is in question, e.g. in Algerian revolution African women were doing better in education than men in the UK.

5) We must be careful about our concept of sexism. African societies do not institutionally and culturally oppress their women. Colonial history undermined our culture – it is responsible for the oppression of women.

6) Concerning the question of sexism, we've got to be dispassionate. We've got to remove our coloured glasses, if we are ever going to improve and therefore benefit from the great resource that our women are in African societies. African societies are falling apart because they are functioning on half their strength. The great potential in their women is ignored and put aside and wasted, and we cannot pretend. It would be wonderful to say everything is beautiful except for this great problem of imperialism, colonialism etc – but our men must be prepared to open their minds and wash away the cloth that is covering us now. The truth of the matter is there is sexism and very strong. The only thing is our societies have, for a very long time, seen women in a bi-focal view. We have the great honour that we give to our women – our older women; they are placed on a pedestal, they are respected and accorded power by the male sector of their society. Those women do run affairs and when some men are prepared to 'coach' these women, they are 'coaching' part of the truth. But what about the greater mass of women. Women do not see themselves as great, revered, honoured, achieving creatures of their societies. The male attitude to women is enshrined in poetry and in all the literature written by men. We are here to strip the African woman of that unfortunate image. We are oppressed, and until our men recognize that oppression, we are never going to get full-strength performance on the African continent.

7) Sexism has been a part of African society. Colonialists built on it and used it and other negative attitudes towards women existing in traditional society to further divide and rule.

EAST AFRICAN WOMEN: Commentary on Slide Show

NINETY per cent of the people in Africa are peasants. 80% of the agricultural work which is the backbone for survival in Africa is done by women. This includes digging and planting.

East Africa like the rest of Africa has gone through four phases in its history. First there was the communal phase: Livestock-keeping and agricultural activities were carried out on a communal basis. Even here the position of women was a dependent one – the power lay with the men. For example among the Chagga in Tanzania, only men could inherit land. Amongst the Wagogos even though the women had some say in terms of livestock distribution the real power lay with the men. In the so-called matriarchal societies, land and power lay in the hands of men. So the men in these societies gained the power of control over the use and distribution of the basic means of survival. From this position, women have been bought and sold in slavery, used as tools of production and reproduction for the sustenance of man's property.

The British text-books will tell us that the slave trade was ended by them. The reality is very different. The British participated directly in the slave trade and brutal exploitation by the sons and daughters of Africa until it was no longer profitable for the economy. When it became less lucrative to maintain the structure as a result of the growing resistance to the system, the British did change their tune.

We all know 1884 when Africa was sliced like a piece of cake. Africa was then after 1884, plunged into yet another phase – capitalism. Capitalism in Britain was beneficial to the British for it developed their productive forces the wealth of the country could be kept in the country and then re-invested. That was not the case with capitalism in the colonies, because the profit made out of people's labour was siphoned out of the country and what little remained at home was spent and squandered on importing luxury goods. There was little re-investment. Industries in Europe were desperate to control the cheap raw materials and food sources from Africa. Africa also provided markets for their manufactured goods and places to invest capital in mines and agriculture and in cheap labour.

Under this colonial system men had to labour in the plantations and settler farms. Peasant agriculture was left to the women or children or old people. Women became the backbone of agricultural production.

Colonialism directly and brutally weakened the African woman's economic position. It also imposed a culture of subjugation, through Christianity, which saw women as moral inferiors; and racism which proclaimed that black people were inferior. It suppressed African history and claimed that African culture did not exist. In fact, the colonialists deliberately set about to try and change African culture. The impact of this was shown by the fact that all over the world, in every aspect of culture, woman was central. All this was so pervasive that the traces of it are still with us. For example the notion that African hair and skin is not beautiful and the African woman must change it in order to be acceptable to the white people. But African culture lived on. It survived. Repressed, persecuted and betrayed by some social groups who were in league with the colonialists, African cultures survived all the storms.

There are many definitions of culture, but the one given by Cabral will suffice. It tells us not only what culture is, but why it survived.

"Whatever may be the ideological or idealistic characteristic of cultural expression, culture is the essential element of a history of a people. Culture is perhaps the product of this history, just as a flower is the product of a plant. Like history or because it is history, culture has at its material base the level of the productive forces and the mode of production."

So African culture survived and became the culture of resistance, identified in the 50s and 60s with the struggle for national liberation. Women too played their part in it. We have the example of Me Katilili, the 70 year old leader of the Giriama People's Resistance to British occupation. In 1922 in front of the Norfolk Hotel in Nairobi, Mary Muthoni Nyanjiru was shot dead when she was leading a massive workers protest and demonstration at Harry Thuku's arrest. Near Moshi in Tanzania, we have reports of massive protests by Pare women against colonial occupation and land grabbing.

In Kenya, cultural resistance has been important over a long period of time. Songs, dances, drama and poetry have long been used as a powerful vehicle of protest. The Mau Mau had Dedan Kimathi for example, who, as leader of the Kenya Land and Freedom Army launched an open-air theatre movement as a means of rallying support for the nationalist cause.

Independence was a time of hope, great aspirations and expectations. In the 70s long after Kenya's independence, Ngugi and others at the Kamirithu Community Educational and Cultural Centre carried on the tradition. Kamirithu is a place which illustrates Kenya's recent history, and is also tied to the previous phase of history. It was established by the British as an emergency village, where people whose villages had been destroyed by the security forces for supporting the guerrillas were moved to concentration camps. By the end of the colonial period Kamirithu had developed into a labour reserve for the plantations of the areas and the factories of Limuru. This is still the situation today. 10,000 landless people live in this rural area with hardly any facilities, competing for jobs in the plantations and in the large farms, and in the industrial factories owned by multi-nationals like Brooke Bond and Bata Shoe Company.

In the late 30s the villagers of Kamirithu themselves built a small modern community centre. There the peasants and workers who found themselves betrayed after independence, met local intellectuals who were involved in the struggle against foreign control. The first Kamirithu play was "*Ngaahika Ndenda*" ("I will marry when I want") co-authored by Ngugi wa Thiong'o and Ngugi wa Mirii. The play became the focus of the community and its life and it was played in a 2,000 seat open-air theatre built by the people themselves. The play opened and after seven days of playing to packed audiences, it was banned.

Why have independent African states been so scared about the voice of the people? Such voices as we hear in the theatre as represented by Kamirithu? The fact is that in every country in East Africa faced with massive struggles against colonialism, the class to which the British colonialists transferred power was far from being the representative of the people. They were in general the former feudal rulers of the members of the ruling class, educated in the West and committed to the West. They did not have the people's interests at heart.

In Tanzania and Uganda during the struggle for independence, the national leaders generally embodied the aspirations of the people for independence – their political liberty and national identity. During that time the people fought together but as soon as the new flag was raised, the national leaders divorced themselves from the people and started to defend the same structures that were created by colonialists. To some extent, Kenya has become a classic example of a neo-colonial state. Examples where leaders have opened doors even wider to neo-colonial interests, and acting as managers for foreign interests – economic, cultural and political – in addition there is an American military base established in Mombasa since 1980. People who have protested against this base have been jailed. The base has had a profound impact on the lives of the Kenya people and especially on women. In a country where people face acute poverty and where people have lost their source of income, the land, the military base is like a magnet which draws women who hope to be bread winners for their starving children and will do anything to earn money. In Mombasa where the base is situated, prostitution is rampant. Women have to cater for yet another need created by capitalism – the sexual needs of US troops. There are about 3,000 US sailors who roam the streets of Mombasa on any one day. After the killing of two Kenyan women and the marines set free by the courts, Kenyan women have once more become goods to be bought and killed according to the whims of the imperialists.

Women in Africa cannot talk of women's liberation as separate from liberation from neo-colonialism. At the same time, history has shown that the so-called national liberation movements which do not consider the issue of emancipation of women as being important will ultimately fail everyone and only serve the purpose of neo-colonialism.

AMANDINA LIHAMBA

**SOLIDARITY FOR
INTERNATIONAL
WOMEN'S DAY
FROM CAMDEN COUNCIL
WOMEN'S UNIT**

THE COOPERATIVE MOVEMENT IN ZIMBABWE

SEVERAL features mark the development of co-operatives in Zimbabwe.

The colonial Rhodesian state was instrumental in creating co-operatives which were in every sense a negation of co-operatives as essentially conceived by the 1895 International Co-operative Alliance. Not only were co-operatives organised along racist lines with white colonist farmers and railway workers constituting themselves in the racially exclusive Farmers and Railways co-ops governed by the various Rhodesian Company Acts, Blacks were confined to black only co-ops run under the 1956 co-op act.

Contrary to the one share one vote universal co-operative principle, voting strength within the white co-ops was dependent on a co-op member's wealth or shares he or she owned.

The 1956 Co-operative Act gave powers to the invariably white Co-op Registrar and his white Co-op Development Officers to interfere with the running of black co-ops. Thus the administration of the black peasant co-ops could be arbitrarily undertaken by white co-ops officers. These officers could order the dissolution of such co-ops at will and impose a levy on the sale of black co-op members produce for the purposes of creating the "Native Development Fund". In theory black co-op members were supposed to benefit from the provision of short and/or medium term loans deriving from this fund. The reality however was that black co-op members suffered crippling high interest which benefitted the white banks and the bulk of the "Development Fund" was spent on the highly inflated salaries of an over-manned white bureaucracy running these black co-ops. The unpopularity of these colonial institutions is reflected by how from 1956 to 1979 only 370 co-ops were registered with a paid up membership of 43,520 and a share capital of \$251,387 Zim Dollars.

More genuine co-ops such as the one at Cold Comfort Farm inevitably opposed the racism and exploitation inherent in the colonial co-ops. They suffered harassment and inevitable seizure of their property by the Rhodesian government.

In contrast, the experience gathered by the Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU) in running their agricultural activities along collectivist lines during the national liberation phase, has served to inform the directions of co-ops development in independent Zimbabwe.

Such was the popularity of the co-ops that with the accession to power by ZANU led by Robert Mugabe in 1980, the co-ops membership had by 1985 risen from 43,520 to 115,584, share capital had swelled from 251,387 to 775,483 numbers of co-ops had similarly risen from 370 in 1979 to 1380 by 1985.

Before independence co-ops only handled 6,000 tones of produce per year but after independence this figure has risen to 88,000. Further evidence indicate that Zimbabwe co-op movement now handles 22% of all grain produce and nearly 25% of all cotton produce in Zimbabwe.

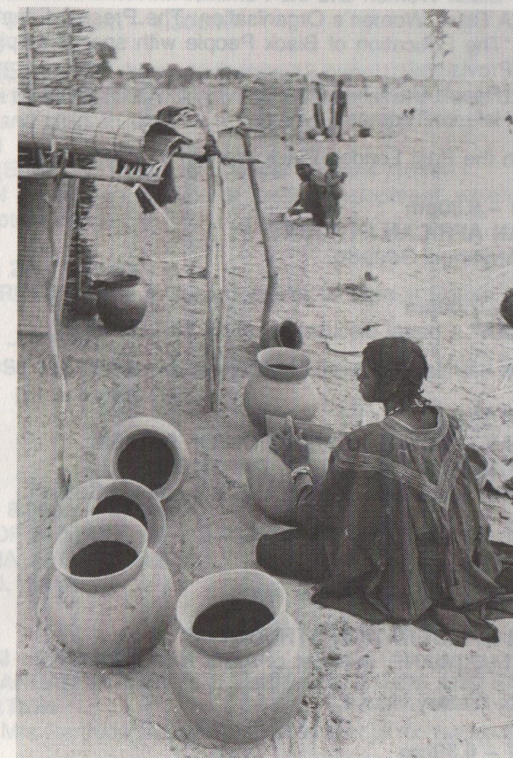
The Zimbabwe government has been supportive in these developments by providing over 400 rural warehouses, expanded co-op staff development schemes, the purchase of over 262 collective farms 31 of which are already settled and the established of a co-op Project Finance channelled through the Zimbabwe Development Bank.

Major drawbacks of the co-op movement in Zimbabwe remain the way the majority of co-ops members are still predominantly involved in buying and selling – 70,000 out of the 80,00 co-op members in 1983 were members of marketing and supply co-ops. Lack of adequate project finance and management knowhow and the intrinsic meaning of co-operation still plague the co-op development. Many excombatants most of whom are women have benefitted from the development of more genuine co-ops in Zimbabwe.

More concerted efforts still need to be positively angled towards achieving women's effective control and wider participation in Zimbabwe's co-op movement.

JOYCE CHENZIRA MUTASA

February 18, 1986



Maggie Murray

An African woman potter

PROGRAMME OF EVENTS

TALKS

Saturday March 8 – 3.30pm

A FRESH LOOK AT THE PORTRAYAL OF WOMEN IN THE FILMS OF ATIAT el ABNOUDI

by : LEILA NAGATY Egyptian freelance journalist.

Tuesday March 11 – 6.30pm

OFFICIAL LAUNCH OF FOCUS

Guest of Honour: MRS SALLY MUGABE.

Wednesday March 12 – 6.30pm

PROFILE OF AFRICAN WOMEN IN BRITAIN

A panel discussion with:

Ama Gueye Introduction

Cherly Monteith "Black Women and the Feminist Movement: A Historical Analysis"

ELBWO A Black Women's Organisation: The Present Situation.

Sybil Morgan "The Education of Black People with special emphasis on Nursery Provision."

Barbara Beckles "Report Back from the Nairobi UN Conference."

Chair: Haleem Thomas

Organised jointly with the East London Black Women's Organisation.

Thursday March 13 – 6.30pm

"THE POTTER IN AN AFRICAN CONTEXT"

Talk with slides by **Anyango Odundo**.

Thursday March 20 – 7.00pm

"WOMEN IN ERITREA" a panel discussion led by TIBLEZ BEINE

Organised jointly with the National Union of Eritrean Women (UK)

Friday March 21 – 7.30pm

INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR THE ELIMINATION OF RACISM

"WOMEN IN THE STRUGGLE AGAINST APARTHEID"

A panel discussion with speakers from the ANC's Women's Section.

Organised jointly with the ANC Women's Section.

Saturday March 22 – 6.30pm

At Wesley House, 70 Great Queen Street, WC2

"AFRICAN WOMEN IN LIBERATION STRUGGLES"

Speaker: THANDIE MAKIOWANE, member of Akina Mama wa Africa

Organised jointly with Wesley House.

Thursday March 27 – 6.30pm

WOMEN IN SOUTH AFRICAN PRISONS

by ESTELLA MOABI.

Organised jointly with the PAC Women's Section.

SWAPO WOMEN'S COUNCIL

Friday March 28, 1986

4.00–5.30pm

Film

Introductory speech by a member of SWAPO Women's Council –

Pashukeni Shoombwe

5.30–6.30pm

WORKSHOPS

i) Namibian women and Education.

ii) The Role of Namibian women in the liberation struggle.

iii) Urbanisation and industrialisation in relation to women in the present Namibia.

iv) Primary Health Care within SWAPO and in independent Namibia.

6.30–7.00pm

Reports from workshops and discussions.

7.00–8.30pm

SWAPO Cultural Group.

Songs, poems and a short play about life under apartheid in Namibia.

Admission £2.00 (waged)

£1.00 (concessions)

FILMS

Saturday March 8 – 2.30pm – 4.30pm

HORSE OF MUD

Atiat el Abnoudi (Egypt/1971 black and white/12 mins/16mm.)

A striking first film by an Egyptian woman on the soul destroying process of brick-making in which women and children work long hours to scrape a living.

THE SANDWICH

Atiat el Abnoudi (Egypt/1971/black and white/ 12 mins /16mm.)

A further study of the human aspects of 'underdevelopment' which shows the life of a typical small Egyptian village.

Thursday March 20 – 7.00pm

"THE RAY OF FREEDOM" – a video depicting women in Eritrea.

Friday March 21 – 7.30pm

"I WILL NOT LOSE HOPE" a documentary film on the Mandela family.

Admission: £2 (£1 concessions)

SOCIAL

Friday March 7 – 8.00pm – 2.00am

CELEBRATION OF 29 YEARS OF GHANA'S INDEPENDENCE

with DADE KRAMA, AFRICAN DAWN, LIONESS CHANT

African Music: D.J. WALA

Admission: £4.00

Saturday March 8 – 9.00pm till late

TRIBUTE TO UGANDAN WOMEN FOR THEIR FORTITUDE AND SACRIFICE IN THE WAR OF LIBERATION

Guest of Honour: Mrs Gertrude Njuba, woman member of the National Resistance Council, Uganda.

Followed by BOSA Sounds disco.

Admission: £4.00

Friday March 14 – 9.00pm
SALUTE TO AFRICAN WOMEN IN BRITAIN

Disco

Admission: £3.50 (in advance) £4.00 door

Organised jointly with East London Women's Organisation.

Saturday March 15

PARTY TO VIEW DESIGNER CLOTHES AND JEWELLERY BY NUBI

Winners of 1985 Trendsetter's Design Award, and one of Africa's leading contemporary design teams.

Guest of Honour: H.E. Madame Mame Rose Fall, Senegal

By invitation only.

Food & Bar

Organised jointly with **NUBI**

Saturday March 22

AN EVENING CELEBRATING BLACK WOMEN

Live music with ABACUSH, HENRIETTA ALELE

Disco with a woman D.J.!

Admission £2.50 £1.50 (concessions)

Organised jointly with Wesley House.

Friday March 28 – 9.30-3.00am

Live music with **SHIKISHA**

Admission: £4.00 (in advance) £5.00 (at door)

£3.00 (concessions)

Saturday March 29 – 9.30 – 3.00am

Live music with **SHIKISHA**

Admission: £4.00 (in advance) £5.00 (at door)

£3.00 (concessions)

Sunday March 30 – 9.30 – 3.00am

Live music

Admission: £4.00 (in advance) £5.00 (at door)

£3.00 (concessions)

BOOK EXHIBITION

Monday March 24 to Friday March 28

10.00am to 5.00pm

"An exhibition of books by and on African Women."

ADMISSION FREE!!!

GALLERY

Nike Olaniyi

Tuesday 4 March to Saturday 14 March

BATIKS

by **NIKE OLANIYI**

from Oshogbo, Nigeria



Tuesday March 18 to Saturday March 29

WOVEN RUGS by

THE NIELENI WOMEN'S WEAVING COOPERATIVE

from Segou, Mali

Four Nieleni women will accompany the exhibition to demonstrate their techniques – a loom will be installed in the Centre's Main Hall.

CULTURAL

Thursday March 13 – 2.30pm

The distinguished Kenyan Potter, **Magdalene Anyango Odundo** will give a pottery-making demonstration and a lecture.

AFRICAN CRAFT WORKSHOPS FOR CHILDREN

Saturday March 15, Easter Saturday March 29 and Easter Sunday March 30

10.30am-3.30pm

An opportunity for children from seven to thirteen to spend a day making crafts with African artists.

There will be story telling as well as music workshops.

Please make bookings on 01 836 1973.

ADMISSION FREE!!

Wednesday March 5 – 7.00pm

POETRY EVENING FOR MRS CHERRY GROCE

featuring: SISTER CULCHA, LIONESS CHANT, IYAMIDE HAZELEY, MARY GORDON

Organised jointly with the Cherry Groce Campaign

Admission: £2.50 (waged) £1.50 (concessions)

Tuesday March 11am – 6.00pm (all day)

ZIMBABWE MARKET DAY

Sale of products made by Zimbabwean Women's Cooperatives. An opportunity to sample Zimbabwean food and drink.

Admission: £2.50 £1.50 (Africa Centre Members)

£1.00 (unwaged) 50p (children)

Organised jointly with Zimbabwe Women's Co-op (UK)

Wednesday March 19 – 7.00pm

PERFORMANCE ON CULTURAL IDENTITY

by Efua Graham's students on the "African Women and Health Lecture" Series.

Organised jointly with Foundation for Women's Health Research and Development.

Thursday March 20 – 7.00pm

ERITREAN CULTURAL GROUP present

Dances and songs from different regions of Eritrea

Admission £2.00 (waged) £1.50 (unwaged)

Tuesday March 25 – 8.00pm – 10.30pm

POETRY EVENING WITH JAYNE CORTEZ

Featuring: LIONESS CHANT, AKIMBO, MUNIRAH, JACKIE KAY.

Further information – 699 5265

Admission: £250 (waged) £1.50 (unwaged)

Organised by Apples and Snakes

Friday March 28 – 7.00 to 8.30pm

SWAPO Cultural Group

Songs, poems and a short play about life under apartheid in Namibia

£2.00 (waged) £1 (concessions)

Saturday March 29 – all day (from 11.00am)

UGANDA MARKET DAY

Come to the market and buy indigenous Ugandan food and drink. Matoke and Waragi in plenty.

Monday March 31 – 2.30pm to 4.30pm

THEATRE OF BLACK WOMEN Present **CHIAROSCURO**

Theatre of Black Women, the first and only permanent Black Women's theatre company in England, present their fourth production '**Chiaroscuro**' a two hour show by new playwright Jackie Kay.

NOTE ON PARTICIPANTS

JAYNE CORTEZ was born in Arizona, grew up in California and is currently living in New York. She is the author of five books: **Coagulations**, New and Selected Poems, Thunder's Mouth Press, 1984; **Firespitter**, New York: Bola Press, 1977; **Merveilleux Coup De Foudre** Poetry of Jayne Cortez and Ted Joans, France: Handshake, 1982; **Mouth on Paper**, New York: Bola Press, 1973; **Festivals and Funerals**, New York: Bola Press, 1977; **Pisstained Stairs and the Monkey Man's wares**, New York, 1983; and three recordings **Unsubmissive Blues**, New York, Bola Press, 1980; **There It Is**, New York, 1983; **Celebration and Attitudes**, New York: Strata East Records, 1975.

Her poetry has also been published in many journals, magazines and anthologies. She has lectured and recited her poetry often accompanied with music throughout Africa, Latin America, North America and Europe.

Her poetry is intensely, proudly political and deals with stark realities of life. The language she uses is often shocking. She has been described as "not a poet for the faint hearted".

She belongs in a category with people like Amri Baraka, Sonia Sanchez, Don L. Lee and the late Larry Neal.

JACKIE KAY was born in 1961, brought up in Scotland, raised on politics and demonstrations. She has always had a commitment to change. She was one of the four women published in **A Dangerous Knowing**, Sheba, 1984, reprinted July 1985. Some of her poems have been published in *Artrage* and the *Feminist Review*.

She is also the author of the play called **Chiaroscuro**.

MUNIRAH was formed in 1985 by a group of African women committed to dispelling stereotype images and myths about African people. They are primarily a community based theatre group and are five in the group: **Talibah, Liza, A-dziko, Sherma and Hazel**.

Their first full length production was "**On the Inside**" which is a fusion of poetry, drama, dance and song.

AKIMBO was formed five years ago as a music duo and are residential in Leeds. **Deb'bora** was born and raised in the Bronx, New York. **Andy Wilson** is from Manchester. They have recorded an album, "**AKIMBO**" and an EP, "**SO LONG TROUBLE**"

"Exhilarating, celebratory event" Zig Zag.

NIKE OLANIYI, is a leading Oshogbo artist from Nigeria of international repute. She creates brilliantly coloured batik wall hangings. Nike comes from a generation of crafts people and learned from her grandmother to make "adire" cloth, a dyeing method that uses stard-resist to make designs. She uses her own dyes made out of local vegetation. Her batiks often relate stories from Yoruba culture.

NIELENI is the name of a Malian woman from the village of Segou, famous for her tirelessness and bravery. She grew better crops than any man or woman in the village. **NIELENI** is also the name of a dynamic women's weaving co-operative in Segou. Using local materials, the women make high quality thick pile knotted rugs woven from Malian wool and Senegalese cotton. The rugs are usually decorated with traditional designs. The women have been experimenting with new patterns and dyes. Two hundred women are involved in the cooperative which sells most of its rugs in Mali.

MAGDALEN ANYANGO ODUNDO trained in Nairobi and at Cambridge College of Art, West Surrey College of Art and the Royal College. She has worked with the famous Abuja Potters of Nigeria and taught at the Commonwealth Institute.

Her work was highly acclaimed at the July UN Decade for Women Conference in Nairobi. She has exhibited widely both in Kenya and in Canada, Germany, the States and in the UK and her work is in many public collections including the Crafts Council Collection, the Victoria and Albert Museum and the British Museum. She is a member of the Craftsmen(!) Potters Association and the British Craft Centre.

NUBI, winners of the 1985 Trendsetters Design Award, are one of Africa's leading contemporary design teams. **NUBI** is a collective of fashion designers, artists, jewellers and photographers which was set up to promote African fashion, designs and jewellery and in particular those originating from East Africa.

Their main objectives are to share their skills with other black people, to bring a better and wider understanding to Londoners of African fashion, especially East African, by holding workshops, seminars, publications, shows and exhibitions.

Nubi has been designing costumes for community performing groups, individuals and organisations. They have held fashion shows at the Commonwealth Institute, the Royal Commonwealth Society, Africa Centre, and have also participated in a number of GLC funded projects including the Ethnic Minorities Unit "Struggle and Success" event in the Summer of 1985.

ROSMARY DA-COSTA is a singer, actor and dancer. She was born in Nigeria and trained in London.

She has had extensive experience on television and film productions including parts in *Music Man*, *Zee & Co*, and **Shirley's World**.