

AZASO

TRIBUTE TO WOMEN



Helen Joseph and Dora Tamana

"Exploitative society promotes the ideology, culture and education that serves its interests. It does so with women, just as it does with colonised society. All are deliberately kept in ignorance with a view to making them resigned to their position, of instilling in them an attitude of passivity and servility".

SAMORA MACHEL

WOMEN UNITE

As women in South Africa, it is important for us to understand the nature of our oppression, for it is only after understanding it, can we identify the target of our attack and plan the appropriate strategy and tactics for our struggle.

Black women in South Africa suffer three types of oppression.

1. Political oppression, which is common to all blacks in South Africa, ie. the denial of rights to vote for or choose the type of government we want, and the denial of rights as a people in South Africa.
2. Economic oppression as black workers in South Africa. Black women workers are even more exploited than men workers. They are paid lower wages for the same job, are treated as temporary staff and can be fired at anytime especially if they fall pregnant.
3. Social oppression which stems from the idea that women are born inferior to men and therefore have to play an inferior role in society. The socialization process starts at birth and women and men are geared towards certain roles in society. Men most often towards leadership positions and professional jobs and women towards household duties and secretarial jobs. This socialization process continues throughout ones life such that most people accept it as a natural phenomenon and a way of life.

Having understood the forms of oppression, we can see that the struggle is not between men and women, where men are seen as the source of our oppression. Nor is it a struggle for mechanical equality between men and women ie. being paid the same wages as men, and having equal status as men in society, because this will mean equality within the present status quo. Our struggle is a struggle between women and the existing social order. It is a struggle of the oppressed against oppression.

Our main weapons in the struggle for liberation are UNITY and ORGANISATION. Unity is realised through common effort, links are forged through collective work and study, through criticism and self-criticism and through action against oppression.

Organization can be achieved through women's groups and organization. A women's group's first demand should be the clarification of our ideas, to get rid of misconceptions and erroneous ideas concerning the role and liberation of women. A women's group usually tackles the question of social oppression, but more important, it must be seen as a stepping stone towards involvement in the broader struggle can we destroy the foundations of exploitative society and rebuild society on new foundations. Foundations built on the demands of the FREEDOM CHARTER.

"The fundamental struggle is for national liberation of the oppressed people of South Africa, and any women's organization that stands outside this struggle must stand apart from the mass of women. What was realised by the Federation of South African Women was that it would be impossible for women to achieve their rights as women in a society in which so many fundamental rights are denied to both men and women by virtue of their colour and their class. Therefore just as there can be no revolution without the liberation of women, the struggle for women's emancipation cannot succeed without the victory of the revolution".



azaso

HAMBA KAKUHLE QABANE

FAREWELL COMRADE DORA



**"You who have no work, speak.
You who have no homes, speak.
You who have no schools, speak.
You who have to run like chicken
from the vulture, speak.
Let us share our problems so that we
can solve them together.
We must free ourselves.
Men and women must share house-
work.
Men and women must work together
in the home and out in the world.
There are no creches and nursery
schools for our children.
There are no hospitals for the aged.
There is no one to care for the sick.
Women must unite to fight for these
rights.
I opened the road for you,
you must go forward."**

DORA TAMANA 1901-1983

AZASO : a tribute

"When people were suffering, Dora was there. When they gave us passes, she was there. When the children needed creches, she was there. Dora was always there. She opened our minds to fight for our rights".

These are the words of one of Mama Dora's comrades. But they tell us the feelings of thousands of South Africans. When people wanted their rights especially women, she was there until she died. And her spirit is still among us, telling us to take forward the struggle.

Mama Dora was born in the Transkei in 1901. She moved to Cape Town during the Second World War, and in 1942, joined the Communist Party, working hard in community struggle around creches and squatter removals. During the 1950's Dora's practical activities increased. She played an active role in the Defiance Campaign of 1952 and in 1954 was elected National Secretary of South African Women. In 1955 she was elected as an ANC Women's League delegate to the Congress of the People in Kliptown where the people's FREEDOM CHARTER was adopted.

Thereafter she and Lilian Ngoyi were chosen to attend the World Congress of Mothers in Lausanne. Later she was invited to China, Mongolia and the Soviet Union. On her return she was banned and subjected to constant harassment by the police. She was detained for four months in 1960 and sent to prison in 1963.

However nothing could silence Dora. In 1980 she was a founder member of the United Women's Organisation and delivered the keynote speech at the inaugural meeting of the organisation. Even though she was sick and old, she was always there at UWO functions talking to the women and giving encouragement.

On Saturday 23 July, Dora Tamana died, aged 83. Her whole life was dedicated to a united, non-racial and democratic South Africa, to a society based on the FREEDOM CHARTER. She opened the door for us to go forward, united and strong.

Mama Tamana we salute you. Go well. You have shown us the way. We will take up your fight.

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NATIONAL WOMENS DAY

On 9 August 1956, 20000 women from all walks of life, converged on the Union Buildings in Pretoria to protest against the pass laws. This great movement in the history of our struggle was honoured by being National Women's Day by the African National Congress.

The atmosphere at the Union Buildings was charged with an overwhelming sense of oneness and powerful determination as the women swarmed around the statue of Louis Botha, filling the amphitheatre completely. The women had been organised in the face of tremendous difficulty and harassment; this did not deter the

women from walking in groups of 2 and 3 to Pretoria.

Twenty thousand women had gathered to reaffirm their opposition to the regime based on exploitation and discrimination and their commitment to the principles of justice and democracy. Then stood in silent protest for 30 minutes, fists defiantly raised in the Congress salute. Then one strong voice of freedom sang

Strijdom,

You have tampered with the women
You have struck a rock
You have dislodged a boulder
You will be crushed.