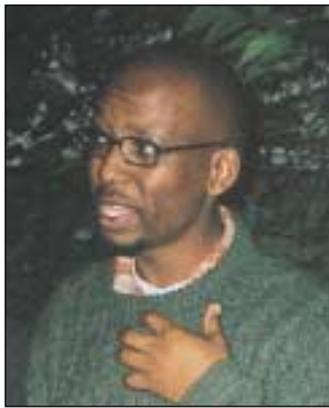




The male fear of democracy

By KOPANO RATELE

He says: It can't work. Not in our culture. It's a foreign thing. Women and men all equal? Children back-talking, going on about the children's charter, rights, and demanding to be heard? Absolutely not. I say we must go back to our customs. We must leave all these foreign ideas well alone. We have a culture we can be proud of. Why are we turning into mimic people? Women need to respect men. God made the world that way. God is the father, not a mother. God put men in charge, to be heads, because they are stronger. Women have their role, but men must protect and lead women and children? It is God's gift to His world that males have been chosen to rule. God gave women other things. He said women's role is to help men by looking after the things in the house and bearing children. Men must go out and work. When I say men must rule it doesn't mean they have to beat up women for every little mistake. People make mistakes. But as gov-



ernors, men must be firm and fair. When women cross the line they must be brought back. They must be taught what is right and what is wrong. Then things will go back to normal. When they do wrong things and they claim human rights – that can't be right. What rights do they need? They have rights. When children don't do their work, when they fool around and do not sweep the yard, when they stand at the shops and talk all day, when they do not clean the house, do you say they shouldn't be disciplined? This is our law, the law given to us by our forefathers. The problems you see around us are due to this democracy talk and human rights and all of that. We must go back to traditions if we want to stem the tide of murders and abuse and all these other new things. We must stop this nonsense of talking about democracy, all these things about equality this, rights that, freedom and all these other foreign things. Let politicians talk about them. Politicians will say anything. Thabo Mbeki? They

know nothing. Remember what happened to Mandela? He couldn't control his wife, could he? I have never shared a meal with these men, although I have voted. But I say politicians get paid to say all manner of things. You can't trust a politician. It is good that we do not have apartheid anymore, but now these politicians want to change things that must be left alone. Let them go to Pretoria and Cape Town and do what they do. But they do not live here these politicians. They do not come here except when they want us to vote for them. They want us to ignore these shaming things women do. They want us to forget where we come from. A man must have respect. We must go with the old ways. They are our best guides to the future. This is what I say.

To have begun as above, to quote a hypothetical man ranting against democracy is a way of saying that to some men, as to some women, inequality makes eminent sense. The anti-democratic impulse, without doubt, is only one of many impulses that exist in our society. But we cannot lie to ourselves that to some section of the South African populace the notion of a democratic gender relationship is a nonsensical idea, with

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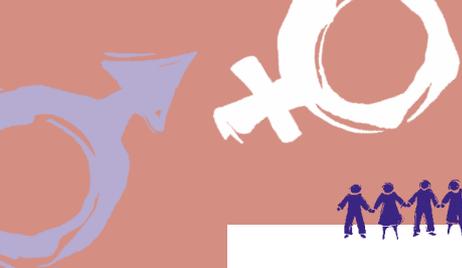
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MEN & GENDER EQUALITY

little relation to Democracy. So I am signalling to a hypothetical man who would voice such things for I am of mind that this thinking remains the ruling thinking in our society in regard to relations between women and men. But more importantly, I am signalling to it because doing so underlines the work of other men and women who are engaged in struggles for bringing gender democracy into the home, to turning the Big Democracy into the small democracy.

In the case we have constructed we refer to God. Bringing in God, Allah (S.W.T.), the Bible or the Koran, is part of the thinking above, and their work is to end the argument. Nature and – interestingly in the same moment – Culture are also employed to similar ends. Who are we to challenge God or Allah (S.W.T.), their Books, and Natural Law and Cultural Traditions? All of them say men are heads of their families, their communities and society, and so it shall be.

But bringing in nature (to limit ourselves to only one of these figures or entities), to defend gender inequality (or any social inequality: the global order of inequality has also now and then turned to God or nature to defend itself) is unnecessary. I think raging against democracy need not rope in the tropes of nature because, I will say presently, come to think of it, the idea of a

democratic, non-sexist society is a hard one to digest and to practise.

Take a moment to think about it again: is it not a terrifying thought to be equal to others? It is a terror because it implies a revolution. And revolution in turn implies death – the death of the old and the birth of the new. We can't imagine equality in the same way as we can't imagine our own death, that is to say, social death.

But why is this so? For to believe in and practise equality implies in one sense to give up power and to write a new contract about sharing power. To bring it down, it means treating one's wife and child (if one has such relations in one's life) as equals to oneself and to protect that equality. To treat one's wife and child as one's equals means a man has to learn a number of things which he is unlikely to have grown up with. For one thing, it means he has to learn that his voice in a relationship, in any discussion with a woman or child, does not carry more weight – not simply because one is male. This of course is what gets conflated in the first place: that knowledge and manhood is the same thing, just as power and maleness is made to be the same thing.

To believe in democracy therefore means males having to go against a long history of social and economic relations, a global history that goes far beyond apartheid and 1994. It means a man has to know this: that up to then he has been listened to and taken seriously in society because of the mere fact that he has a different set of genitalia than females, and not necessar-

ily because he is more knowledgeable or wise.

To live like a democrat means the man has to learn to say he does not know everything. It means he has to pay attention to what his wife or girlfriend or female friend says. It means to accept that though he might be physically stronger, he cannot use his body as a weapon to intimidate women. It means learning to deal with a fear so big that it could change the world – if, that is to say, faced and acknowledged and turned into a struggle for social justice.

In one way it is true then to say that the social problems of violence and women abuse are, ironically, due to democracy: that is, the fear of democracy, the transformation that the advent of democracy entails. It is not true that going back to traditional notions of womanhood and manhood will halt the rate of murders and child abuse. What will have this effect, according to the men involved (alongside women activists) in efforts to bring democracy into our bodies, psyches and homes, is facing our fears. What will reduce the rate and brutality of rape, according to male activists involved in transforming the gender order, is men learning how to be free. It is all of us learning what our freedom means, given where we have been. These lessons – and not going back to the past – are what will make our society and cultures better adapted to our present and future.

Kopano Ratele teaches psychology at UWC and is a member of Getnet's masculinities reference group



To some a democratic gender relationship is a nonsensical idea, with little relation to Democracy

What gets conflated is that knowledge and manhood is the same thing, just as power and maleness is made to be the same thing

To practise equality implies to give up power and write a new contract about sharing power

The views expressed in this newsletter are not necessarily those of Getnet

The quota made the difference

Without the ruling party's quota for women we would have seen far fewer women MPs in Parliament after the election, writes AMANDA GOUWS

Women as a voting constituency are important for two reasons – to be elected as a representative in government and to be provided for *as women* in the policies of political parties.

South Africa currently ranks 11th in the world with regard to the number of women in parliament. Our relatively high number of 131 women in parliamentary seats can be attributed to the proportional list electoral system and to the ruling African National Congress party's acceptance of a one third voluntary quota for women. Although the benefit of a proportional list system is that it ensures that women and small parties can gain access to representation, what really has made the difference in South Africa is the ANC's quota because without this quota there would have been far fewer women in parliament. None of the opposition parties in the country have supported a quota for women's representation.

Quotas always raise the issue of fairness and impact on competition. However, the main intention with quotas is to move away from equality of opportunity to equality of result. Rather than looking at quotas as a violation of the principle of fairness, they can be understood as a form of compensation for the structural barriers that prevent fair competition. It could be argued that quotas:

- compensate for actual barriers that prevent women from getting a fair share of political seats
- prevent women from being made token representatives



Powerful constituency: women queue to exercise their vote

- embody the right of women to equal representation
- ensure that women's experiences are included in political life.

Successful quota systems lead to:

- the active recruitment of women by political parties
- a critical mass rather than a token few women who will influence the political culture
- women gaining possibilities to influence decision-making.

Whenever the issue of women's merit in relation to quotas is raised the question about men's merit also arises. If it is argued that women do not compete on grounds of merit how do we know that men compete on grounds of merit in electoral systems that favour men?

More than two years ago the Gender Advocacy Programme (GAP) embarked on a 50/50 campaign aimed at increasing women's representation in government to 50%. This campaign is based on the issue of fairness in representation. If women constitute 50% of the voting population they should be entitled to 50% of the representation in

government. The 50/50 campaign was launched in New York in 2000 as a follow-up on the 1995 World Conference on Women in Beijing, where the principle of equal representation was accepted. The 50/50 campaign is championed in more than 60 countries worldwide.

The question that we need to ask is if greater representation of women in government makes a difference to the institution as well as to policy making? Experience in legislatures with high numbers of women has shown that the inclusion of women in government not only brings about a change in the institutional culture but also puts women's issues on the agenda. Women who have a consciousness of gender injustice and inequality clearly make a bigger difference than those who do not have this awareness do. Women's representation, it has been found, leads to institutional change in the sense that it creates a gender-friendly environment and procedural

Quotas can be understood as a form of compensation for the structural barriers that prevent fair competition

If parties were more gender-sensitive they could mobilise the women's vote to their advantage



change. It also leads to representational change with the continued access of women to the legislatures. But, more importantly, women are placed in a position to contribute to policy change that will counter gender inequality. In this regard the views of women will become normalised and not be seen as something out of the ordinary.

As a constituency women have sufficient numbers to vote a party into power or prevent it from gaining power. In the 1999 election more than 1.5 million more women registered to vote than men, yet the women's vote made no difference to the outcome of the election. Research has shown that there is really no "gender gap" (women voting for different parties or issues than men) in the support that women and men gave to parties in the 1999 election. But women singled out different issues than men as important. What this tells us is that if parties were more gender-sensitive they could mobilise the women's vote to their advantage.

With 131 women in parlia-

ment after the 2004 election women constitute 32.8% of the National Assembly, and this is mostly due to the increase in the ANC's share of the vote and the party's commitment to a gender quota. ANC women now fill 107 seats (82% of women) in parliament. In this election the ANC also made women more likely to be elected because nearly every third name on the national candidate's list was that of a woman. (Still not a zebra list where every second name is that of a woman.)

While the 50/50 campaign was not successful, women in cabinet are approaching the 50% mark – they represent 41.2% of current ministers and deputy-ministers and 44.5% of the premiers. President Mbeki has shown his party's commitment to gender equality by appointing 10 women as ministers and 12 women as deputy-ministers. Women now fill some of the most powerful ministries in government such as justice (Brigitte Mabandla), foreign affairs (Nkosazana Zuma) and education (Naledi Pandor). These portfolios are not the "soft

ministries" usually assigned to women. Other ministries headed by women are agriculture and land (Thoko Didiza), housing (Lindiwe Sisulu), home affairs (Nosiviwe Mapisa-Nqakula), health (Manto Tshabalala-Msimang), minerals and energy (Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka), public service (Geraldine Fraser-Moleketi), water and forestry (Buyi Sonjica), and communications (Ivy Matsepe-Cassaburri). While the social portfolios such as health and housing are indeed run by women all these portfolios together form the cornerstone of social transformation in South Africa.

Women in parliament can make a difference to the lives of women in the community by putting women's needs on the agenda and by formulating policies that are women friendly. However, their commitment to gender equality will determine to what extent they take this challenge seriously.

Professor Gouws heads the political science department at the University of Stellenbosch ♀

A constructive response to HIV/Aids

The experience of a male community worker, as related to Boitshepo Lesetedi of PPASA

David Mbetse started community-based care for HIV-positive people in Bushbuckridge, Limpopo at a time when he was the principal of a school. One day a woman from the village arrived at the school to tell him that "one of his people was dying".

There was a big challenge awaiting the principal in this crisis situation. The patient was female and her family had disowned her. They treated her badly and had now abandoned her to die on her own. She lived in a shack and family members

would push food under the door of the shack without bothering to check whether she was eating it or not.

When David arrived at the woman's house she was in a very critical state; she had diarrhoea and could not hold down any food or drink. Not surprising under the circumstances, the home was in an unpleasant state. The school principal in his suit had to start by getting the patient cleaned up before he could take her to hospital. This was what presented a big challenge to David – it is unusual for

a man to bathe a female, especially if they are not related. Home-based care is usually seen as the work of women and taken care of by women, not by men.

David used his own car as an ambulance since the hospital was very far from the village. The patient died seven days after being admitted to hospital.

To date this project has trained 10 home care givers. They have a vibrant referral system and a good working relationship with the police and the Department of Health. ♀



On a wing and a prayer ...

Setting out to establish a gender training organisation in 1994 was to fly where only eagles dare, says **Pethu Serote**, Getnet's director and founder board member, who has grown a splendid pair of wings over the years. She recalled the highlights of a rewarding decade in an interview with **Ronel Scheffer**.

Q: In a sense Getnet must be the oldest gender organisation in the country, working in the particular way you're working?

To say we are the oldest doesn't actually describe Getnet. Getnet is the only organisation that is training in gender equality in South Africa and in the region. We occupy a particular unique position as the provider of services and also the trainer and developer of skills in gender equality.



was Nozipho January-Bardill, Frank Meintjies, Jeremy Daphne, Namhla Tekida, Michelle Friedman ...

Q: It seems the group had quite a big vision from the start. You were thinking about the Southern African Development Community (SADC) from the start. Was that because of the history of the liberation movement?

It was just the realisation that there were others who had already done a lot of work in the area, and that we could learn from our brothers and sisters in the SADC region, and we could also contribute towards their experience. It was also a sense of belonging to a bigger community and not having South Africa isolated again as in the past. So there was that sense that we belong to the regional community.

Q: Flying where only eagles dare is how you have described the context before and during 1994 when discussions were held around the formation of Getnet?

At the time we started Getnet many people who were in NGOs had left the sector for government and therefore many organisations were in crisis. Funding was shifting from NGOs to government, and there was a situation created where NGOs were folding. So when we started, as a very small NGO, people around us wanted to know what it is that makes us think we will survive when big NGOs around us were collapsing.

Q: What made Getnet think it could do this thing that nobody else could do?

We were a group that was committed to the work and was active in the sector. And it was also a group that felt strongly that instead of getting expertise

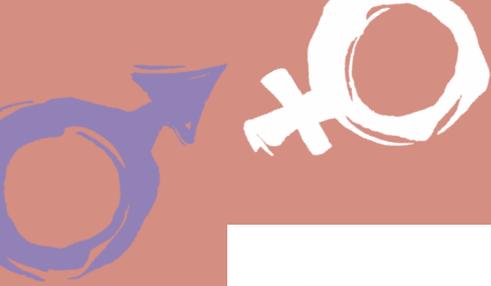
from outside, we could actually grow our own expertise that responds to the situation here. We spoke about indigenising the work, responding to the issues of the country. It was also at a time where there was the spirit of translating democracy into reality in the country. So there was an excitement about it. Excitement to do something.

Q: The discussions about starting the organisation – who were the people around at the time?

It was a group of people who were gender activists, gender researchers, people who were employed in different institutions who had come together because they were all interested in spearheading gender in South Africa from the different sectors. They were all people who were active in doing work towards gender equality at the time. Some of them included Kaizer Thibedi, who was the first co-ordinator of the group. There

Q: The first training event in 1996 – some recollections?

We chose Harare Zimbabwe, because Harare at the time was the home of many networks that were working in the region. We went there as a group of South Africans to do our training there, but also to make contact with networks and inform them of the existence of Getnet. We had an interesting event where we hosted many of them in an evening of dialogue. What made it special was their experiences, the willingness to share and to embrace a new network that had



The road travelled over a decade ...

The idea to establish Getnet was born in intensive discussions among gender activists as democracy was dawning in South Africa. Early in 1995 the organisation became a reality with three staff members and an office in Athlone, Cape Town.

- In 1996 the first major training of trainers event, with 20 prospective trainers from different provinces in South Africa, took place in Harare, Zimbabwe.

- Later that year, also in Harare, Getnet held its first SADC regional conference to deepen commitment to the implementation of Cedaw and the Beijing Platform of Action by governments in the region. Research into implementation followed. These activities were the launchpad of many focused training and networking events in the region in subsequent years.

- Getnet is recognised as a South African pioneer of note in the area of gender transformation. The organisation was responsible for the 1995 research which led to the establishment in the South African Parliament of the Joint Standing Committee on the Quality of Life and

the Status of Women. It also initiated the constructive involvement of men in transforming gender relations. Over the decade of its existence, Getnet developed its own framework on the social construction of gender, and over the past four years the “triangle framework” evolved, encapsulating the intersection of HIV/Aids, gender-based violence and poverty with gender.

- In 1999, despite a tough funding environment, Getnet became the proud owner of its own office building in Garlandale Estate, Athlone.

- An organisational evaluation in 2000 recognised the need for the organisation to venture formally into income generation projects as a partial means of financial sustainability. It quickly was successful in securing government contracts.

- Getnet’s programmes enjoy partial accreditation with the Services Sector Education and Training Authority.

- In 2002 the organisation received a human rights award from the Human Rights Commission and the Commission on Gender Equality in recognition of its contributions in the field of gender equality.

come about in the region. And also the willingness to open up to South Africa in a new way because previously SA was closed and when people wanted to interact with SA it wasn't the easiest thing. The excitement was in that dialogue, in the sharing – it was a new experience. The other interesting thing was the spectrum of people who were coming from South Africa itself; people came from different sectors and different organisations. They themselves were finding this encounter very exciting.

Q: How did the discussions of 1994 turn into the reality of an organisation?

The discussions started the year before. At the time when the decision was taken to establish the organisation in June 1994, the group who were

meeting regularly had come to the conclusion that the group were now ripe to initiate an organisation. We decided that



Getnet's first staff: Nomvuuyo Simeu, Pethu Serote and Charmaine Fortuin, at the first office in Athlone, Cape Town.

as individuals we should decide whether we wanted to be part of the implementation of the programmes or if we wanted to be in the group overseeing the implementation. So there was a split with those interested in implementation becoming the first trainers panel and the overseers becoming the board of the new organisation. The translation of the ideas and the discussions into an organisation was a big challenge. Fortunately I can say that we have actually managed to translate the ideals of those early discussions into practical programmes and a viable organisation over the years.

Q: What came first? It seems as though a lot was happening at the same time in this new organisation. You were also in the region?



Our own: *Getnet board members at the new office purchased in April 1999.*

We started very very slowly because at the time we were testing whether our ideas around indigenous frameworks would work. Most of the work in 1995 related to gender equality and the establishment of structures within Parliament and nationally. For example, we were contracted by the office of the Speaker to undertake research into what parliament has done to improve the quality of life and status of women in the country. We based it on Cedaw and the Beijing Platform of Action. We were also making submissions on the establishment of the Commission for Gender Equality, so we were part of the lobby group that was working for the establishment of the national machinery for gender equality we now have.

So yes, it wasn't as if we did one thing and we stopped and did the next. At the time we were working on and lobbying structures, we were also engaging with the Platform of Action and Cedaw and looking at what the governments in the region were doing to implement both. So we called a regional conference with over 70 participants from different countries to discuss what our governments were doing and drew up a strategy to make sure that our governments implemented both these measures. So our work in the region already was becoming

practical, we were feeding into the group and learning from the different networks.

In 1996 out of the training in Harare came an idea of the programme on men and masculinities, which we initiated in partnership with the Community Law Centre in Durban. In our workshops we were developing and testing a framework on the social construction of gender, which we can now claim to be a Getnet product. In the last four years we have been involved in action research where we are developing a framework that looks at the intersection between gender and HIV/Aids, gender-based violence and poverty – we call it the “triangle framework”. We can claim it because we actually developed it in a workshop that we set up for SADC region participants. So that was an exciting development in Getnet.

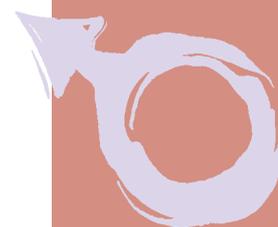
Q: If you could reflect a little on the men's programme. It must have been quite a touchy area to venture into?

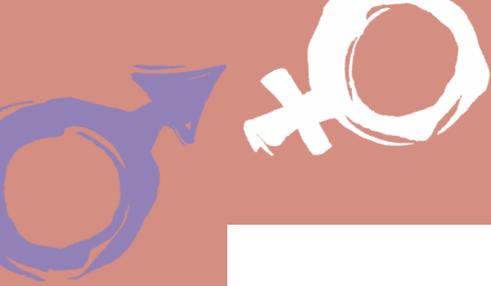
It was. When we initiated the programme lots of people working specifically with women were arguing that we are taking resources that could be allocated to women's work and putting them into men who already control the resources of society. We argued that unless you include men in the equation

you will not be able to achieve gender equality. When we started the programme we realised first of all that there were a group of men out there who were committed to gender, who wanted to work towards gender equality and there was no way of catching that interest. We also discovered that in the programmes facilitated by women – even when there is male participation in workshop – some of the issues that related to masculinity get lost because we are not sharply aware of those issues. The men and masculinities programme have now become a flagship programme of Getnet. But there are many organisations in the country that are running men's programmes for different sectors. We have consolidated the programme to take into account issues that are important for development in the country – reduction of gender-based violence and the spread of HIV/Aids, so the programme has grown in the time we've had it. When we started the programme we were focusing on South Africa and SA men; we have now been contracted to do work in Angola. It means the idea of consolidating our work in region is becoming a reality.

Q: Other important achievements for Getnet?

Our acquisition of the Getnet building was a big step for an organisation that started out as a small fledgling. The building was purchased in partnership with Hivos and the important thing is that we used money that was generated by staff and the trainers network in their programmes and that was an empowering experience for us. The other important insight was that we realised we can actually generate income for ourselves. If we could generate money that





could be matched to buy a building, we could generate money to sustain an organisation.

The actual income generating with consultancy became consolidated after 2000. We had an evaluation then and one of the pointers was that Getnet be enabled to sustain itself with income generation through its consultancies. We also realised that donors were definitely moving away from funding NGOs and putting more and more resources into government. So that situation made us take a decision: in order for Getnet to be financially sustainable we need to take the consultancy work very seriously. So it's been a while now with us struggling with what model we use as an NGO with both funders supporting its work but at the same time generating its own income. We are now reaching the point of resolution of the model.

But in the process of looking at different models, one of things we need to do is take advantage of the development of the National Qualifications Framework in the country and we decided that Getnet should have its programmes accredited so that our participants can earn credits that enable them to take their qualifications to other institutions.

Getnet is now partially accredited and we received a very good and encouraging report from the SA Qualifications Authority. They said things like Getnet is an innovative organisation, it's

doing exciting work and we have very good solid systems. So we have had enough encouragement to know that we are on the right track.

Q: What would you single out as a special contribution of Getnet?

We have amassed a wealth of resources in terms of our experience in the field. All the people who have worked with us have remarked on the amount of experience, the amount of indigenous material that we have in the organisation – it sits in our reports, our newsletters and office as work that we have done. We have also developed the gender skills of many people who now work in Getnet as associates and panel members and have also gone on to do independent consultancy and joined other institutions. We can pride ourselves in 10 years of our existence that many people who have been part of Getnet's programmes have advanced to become leaders in the field of gender equality.

Q: You are leaving Getnet soon. Do you intend staying involved with gender work?

I feel proud to have been part of an organisation that has stuck to its values and the commitment to achieve gender equality. If I had a choice I think I would walk the same road. The work that Getnet does is valuable work and I think the more people we get who are coming to gender equality the better. I feel personally that I learnt a lot being in this organisation, about developing an organisation from scratch and enabling an organisation to stand on its own feet.

I will continue to work in the field. I am committed to both the field and work. I hope that I can continue to contribute to both the field and to Getnet's growth.

Q: Your thoughts about the state of gender equality in South Africa?

We've made big strides in terms of putting in place a national framework to enable gender equality in government, we have enabling legislation, we have a good constitution, we have good policies – I think we need to put more emphasis now on implementing our policies and legislation and ensuring that the achievements of the 10 years translate into real lived experience for women and men in the communities.

There is an increased consciousness of gender in our society. When Getnet started 10 years ago, there were many areas where people didn't know how to proceed, and that has changed. There is also good development in the area of constructive involvement of men in issues of gender equality. Because we are dealing in gender with an area that is emotional, an area that touches our lives and our identities, it is sometimes difficult to see the progress that we have made. It takes a lot of time for us to quantify the changes that have taken place.

Q: Can you still be surprised by contradictions in this area?

No. As I said gender is an area that touches people's lives and identities and there are lots of contradictions in our lives and identities. Therefore I'm not surprised when I see there are contradictions. We are in the process of learning to accept gender equality. I think where we come from in history we haven't experienced gender equality and therefore we will continue this to-ing and fro-ing in terms of contradictions.

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We haven't experienced gender equality before and therefore we will continue this to-ing and fro-ing in terms of contradictions



Experiments in a politics of love & courage

Love, courage and commitment to the poorest combined into a powerful force in the fight against apartheid — and should be revived in our national life, PREGS GOVENDER said when she delivered the Ruth First Memorial Lecture. This is an edited version of her address.

I stand here in memory of Ruth First, a critical communist who was killed for her beliefs and her activism. Like those who have shown the greatest courage, Ruth First knew fear. Her daughters have captured her vulnerability on paper and in film. In Hilda Bernstein's book, *The Rift*, First's youngest daughter, Robyn, describes getting her mother to admit to her fear and vulnerability in prison. Robyn talks of "being brought up in a country-size struggle ... there isn't room for imperfection within that. There's a lot of humanity that gets lost in that".

I stand here aware of our fears, our imperfections and our humanity. The title of my lecture is "Reasserting Politics as the Power of Love and Courage: Experiments in SA's Decade of Democracy" and I dedicate it to Ruth First and all those who have experimented and continue to experiment with politics as the power of love and courage.

In her preface to Govan Mbeki's book, *The Peasants' Revolt*, Ruth notes: "... the commoners of the Transkei were his chief sources of information, and as he loved them, so they trusted him and confided in him."

It was love and not hate that was the most powerful force in the fight against apartheid. Love for child, lover, friend, parent, comrade, community, country ... love for our world, for humanity, for peace, equality and justice.



The best in our movement resolved that the hatred of apartheid's brutality would not lead to emulating that brutality, or to be heroes in one context and bullies in another.

Commitment to poor

Alwinus Mhlatsi recorded his torture, the suffering of his family and his feelings of hatred towards the person who fingered him. But when he eventually sees him, suffering and ill, he gives him money for food. "The hatred faded away. We cannot do bad things to others. We have children to bring up," are his words to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

The African National Congress, in its alliance with the South African Communist Party and the Congress of SA Trade Unions, maintained that equality, non-racialism and non-sexism must guide the struggle against a racist, unequal and

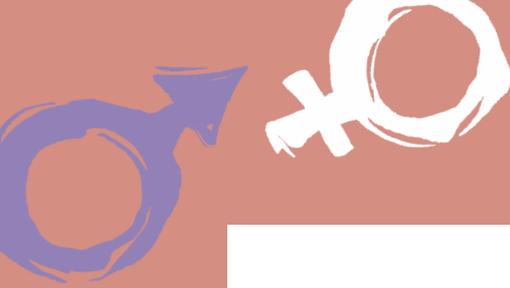
misogynistic state. This reflected an understanding of power which proclaims in the Freedom Charter that "South Africa belongs to all who live in it..." Ours was a movement which recognised the need to transform the systemic power of race, class and gender within a commitment to the poorest.

The ANC, more than any other party, holds the history and her story of our country – for all of us. It is inseparable in our collective memory from the most heroic and the most treasured. Those who hold office in the ANC, by virtue of the elections of 1994, 1999 and 2004, are entrusted with this memory and hope.

Those in politics today occupy the institutions of power that for decades were imbued with the values, vision and objectives of the apartheid state. The ongoing challenge is to ensure that its transformation reflects the interests of the poorest. Those who vest the ANC with power in the elections include many who may not even be able to afford to buy an ANC membership card as compared to those now able to offer massive sponsorships.

In this decade of democracy, the epic courage of those who paid the ultimate price is today honoured. Young comrades such as Phila Ndwandwe (who was kept naked for days before she was murdered by state security), and of whom the murderer com-





mented: “She was brave, this one ... she would not talk.” Ruth First, Chris Hani, Victoria and Griffiths Mxenge, and so many, many others...

Acts of courage

We remember and honour too the everyday acts of courage, of survival in an apartheid state in which diseases of malnutrition and hunger were rife. In Elinor Sisulu’s book, Albertina Sisulu talks of the difficulties she experienced when Walter Sisulu was in prison. She talks of her gratitude to a community, which although poor, was willing to share the little it had. At the World Court of Women in Khayelitsha in 2001, one of the jurors, Zanela Mbeki, commented that although she had known Albertina for so long, it was the first time that she had heard her own story. A story that was distinct from, yet intertwined with, her role as wife, mother and comrade.

We cannot hear only half the story, only half the truth of our nation. It is time to understand and appreciate the everyday acts of courage of women particularly, the role they play in ensuring the survival of families and communities. In the context of masculinity defined by absent fatherhood it is time to assert new definitions of manhood. “Women’s work”, inside and outside the home, needs to be understood, valued and shared equally by men in their lives, by society and by the state.

In 1994, I was deeply honoured by the ANC to become part of a team of MPs that included wise older women such

as Albertina Sisulu, Dorothy Nyembe, Ruth Mompati, Gertrude Shope, Lydia Ngwenya, Mary Turok, Liz Abrahams, Frene Ginwala and many others. We entered Parliament at a time when the power of parliaments across the world was being severely limited by global ideological pressures for decreasing the power of governments. Against the background of apartheid, a capitalist and patriarchal regime that used laws as a weapon in meeting its objectives, Parliament was an important site of transformation.

Agency of women

The word “parliament” is derived from the word “to speak”. The question is whose voices does Parliament speak? Whose voices does it hear in the formu-

lence. Central to our approach therefore has to be the expansion of political, economic, social and personal choices for all SA’s citizens. I would like to share a few of the experiments Parliament engaged in to try to ensure this.

Parliament established the Joint Monitoring Committee on the Quality of Life and Status of Women (JMCW), to ensure that the work of government would improve the quality of lives of women across SA. Its brief was to monitor government’s implementation of the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Beijing Platform for Action. I was elected chair at its inception and served until my resignation in 2002. The JMCW prioritised addressing poverty, HIV/Aids and violence

Ours was a movement to transform the systemic power of race, class and gender within a commitment to the poorest

The challenge was to resist the paternalistic temptation to reduce women to victims



Loyalty to the poor: perspective must be restored

lation of constitutions, policies, legislation, budgets, programmes and institutions? I believed that if we addressed this, it would have a ripple effect in the rest of society. The challenge was to ensure that in the work we did we respected the power and agency of women, without the paternalistic temptation to reduce women to victims. Those who hold office are called upon to fully understand and to be true to this mandate, not as an act of charity, but as an act of compe-

and held hearings on each of these areas with those affected, experts and government departments. It drew up a list of legislative, budget and policy priorities and worked with the rest of Parliament, government departments and civil society to effect over 80 percent of these changes into law. These changes include progressive legislation dealing with customary marriage, child maintenance, domestic violence and improved provisions in labour legislation on topics such as maternity



Parliament speaks: decision-making ignores critical voices

leave, sexual harassment and discrimination.

A slipping agenda

In 1994, I was deployed by the ANC to the Joint Standing Committee on Finance, a vibrant committee chaired by Gill Marcus. In staying true to my mandate, I proposed in the 1994 budget debates that in order to expand political power to economic power we needed to analyse who were targeted by budgets and economics. The yardstick of change had to be change in the lives of the poorest women.

This experiment, known as the SA Women's Budget Initiative, initially made significant advances. Government committed itself to decreasing military spending and reallocating the savings to women's empowerment in its 1996 post-Beijing Cabinet Commitment. The 98/99 National Budget Review included gender responsive budgeting in selected programmes and committed itself to ensuring that this would inform the entire budget in future. Government committed to producing gender disaggregated data to measure whose lives were changing, and how, and to

count women's unpaid labour. These commitments have been effected through Statistics SA. However, in the 2000/2001 Budget, the gender-responsive budgeting in SA that inspired over 50 other countries came to an abrupt end.

In the first few years, we were very clear about our mandate. In the Budget debates, Joe Slovo, ex-MK Commander, argued against the corvettes and other military hardware being punted by the old white generals together with new enthusiastic recruits from our own party. On 4 August 1994, he stated:

"... we can certainly ensure that this bird does not change into an albatross around the neck of the RDP in the next budget ... There can be little doubt in my mind that SA's greatest defence will be a satisfied population. We need to ensure we can deliver better housing, healthcare and education, because then we can be secure in the knowledge that any aggressor trying anything in SA will be unsuccessful. It is the ANC and its allies who tenaciously cling to a vision of a SA in which the population would have such a stake and it is the ANC and its allies who led this country towards the

fulfilment of these goals."

By 1996, the RDP office was closed down and a new macro-economic strategy drafted by a team led by a World Bank consultant consisting of – with one exception – white men. By 1998 negotiations on the arms deal were well under way and by 2001 it came into effect in our national Budget.

Registering my opposition in the defence budget to the arms deal was not an overnight decision. It had followed a number of attempts, since 1994, to engage this debate within the ANC and Parliament. I believed that I was at all times accountable to the ANC and to our mandate. In the ANC caucus I raised the question of whether the arms spending was in line with the priorities that we ourselves had set as the ANC. The Defence Review and the Defence White Paper reiterated that the priority was socio-economic change.

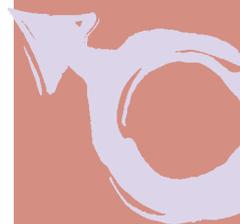
About-turn

In 1998, we had recognised the need to urgently address HIV/Aids in SA, as reflected in the speech of Thabo Mbeki at the launch of the Aids Partnership:

"For too long we have closed our eyes as a nation, hoping the truth was not so real. For many years, we have allowed the HIV virus to spread, and at a rate in our country which is one of the fastest in the world."

However, by the time of the 13th International Aids Conference in Durban in 2000, things had changed so dramatically that it led Nelson Mandela to say:

The silence has made me reflect on the need to clarify our understanding of the collective, of discipline and of loyalty





“Now ... the poor on our continent will again carry a disproportionate burden of this scourge – would, if anyone cared to ask their opinions, wish that the dispute about the primacy of politics or science be put on the backburner and that we proceed to address the needs and concerns of those suffering and dying.”

I do not claim to have clarity as to the causes of the tragic silence for so long on an issue of life and death in our country. It has made me reflect on the need to clarify our understanding of the collective, of discipline and of loyalty, in the hope that we never again lose so much time and so many lives.

If we listen carefully we will have the courage to do what is in our best interests as a country

The tradition of the collective and the tradition of open debate in the ANC has been a proud and honourable tradition. There have however always been those who have attempted to reduce it to group-think. The collective and group-think are polar opposites. The collective is a celebration of the wisdom that resides within each one in the collective. It allows for vigorous and fearless debate and dialogue on the most difficult of issues. It knows that it is important to respect the experience and skills of each one in the collective. Groupthink is the celebration of the individual above the collective, in its naive and unquestioning acceptance of the leader as infallible. It renounces the courage that demands that we be honest with those we love, even if they may not like what it is we have to say. In situations such as these, loyalty has to be defined not in terms of the party hierarchy in government, but in terms of the poorest.

Respect denied

In her preface to *The Peasants' Revolt* Ruth First notes: “He tells the sordid inside story of how chiefs chose power and were bamboozled and cajoled into accepting the Bantustan plan because they learnt there was something in it for them.”

Through the JMCW's list of priorities, the minority status of married women under customary law and the marital power of the husband was finally abolished. However, the law on inheritance and succession which was part of that, and addressed the crucial issue of land, disappeared. This year, Parliament rushed through a version of the Communal Land Rights Bill which formally vested chiefs with power over the land, and thus effectively over the women who live on and work the land. This in a context where government spending on land reform has never exceeded 1% of the budget, and in which the property rights clause of the constitution effectively entrenches the inequitable situation of 85% of South Africans relegated to 13% of the land. During the hearings on the bill, Mama Shabalala of the Rural Women's Movement presented cases of evictions of widows and divorced women:

“If the bill gives amakhosi power over land our suffering will become worse. We will go back to the old days – yet we have been looking forward to rights of our own. If Parliament does not hear us and does not understand that we are talking about our lives, and suffering that is happening every day, then it is like the amakhosi. It also does not respect us.”

Reality change

Globally women bear the brunt of poverty, HIV/Aids and

violence. The macro-economic prescriptions emanating from the G8, the multi-national corporations, the World Bank and the IMF, are detrimental for poor women. According to the recently released ILO study, the position of women workers globally has worsened. The military-industrial complex of the US threatens and devastates countries through unilateral declarations of war, which disregard multilateral decision-making bodies. The continuities of violence against women are expressed in the high rates of femicide (the murder of a woman by her partner) and rape on the battlefields as a weapon of war.

In SA, government's own statistics are devastating. Labour Force Surveys 2000 and 2002 show that unemployment has increased more for African women than for any other group. The poverty rate amongst female-headed households in 1995 was 60%. Unemployment for women in rural areas was 53.6% in 2001. In 1995, only 17% of African women were in waged employment and only 9% were self-employed. The ANC's overwhelming mandate of 2004 must result in change to this reality.

To love means to trust those we love as well as ourselves. It is an extremely difficult thing to do. On each of the issues I have raised, I believe that if we listen carefully to ourselves, to those directly affected, to our own experts who have been trained to look through the eyes of poor women, as well as to those in solidarity with us internationally, who are successfully challenging global constraints to meeting the needs of the poorest, that we would have the courage to do what is in our best interests as a country.



Waiting at the doors of justice

In a context of widespread poverty many women remain excluded from the justice system, writes **Likhapha Mbatha**

After 10 years of democratic rule South African women still find themselves unable to fully access the justice system of the country.

Access to the justice system means access to the courts and the police when in need and when necessary. In South Africa most of our courts are located in the urban centres, or are far apart from one another and serving more than one community across large geographical areas. Police stations, similarly, are also not within comfortable reach of many people who need them. In the rural areas the police stations are few and far apart, which means that those living in remote villages do not have easy access to them.

The high levels of unemployment in many communities, and consequent lack of financial resources, impairs the ability of many people to access the justice system. And in the context of such widespread poverty, the government's allocation of resources is insufficient. For example, resource allocation is insufficient to effectively deal with a crime like rape, which affects women more than men.

Although gender bias persists, with some police officials continuing to view crimes such as theft and fraud as more important than domestic violence, women's cases are dealt with seriously when they are reported to the police. In many instances the greater stumbling block in



effectively dealing with complaints is inadequate infrastructure. A common problem at police stations, for example, is that they do not have vehicles to respond or do follow-ups after receiving

complaints.

However, the shortcomings of the system with regard to women's issues can easily create a wrong impression of the justice system, namely that women's issues are not viewed with appropriate seriousness. When an indigent woman who has been raped is expected to pay for a medical examination she might only be able to see a doctor weeks after the assault took place. Such unfortunate practices are continuing in some parts of our country.

Court resources

The courts that have been set up to deal with women's issues are not only located too far from many communities, but are also often under-resourced. Women who want to access these courts have to incur transport expenses and, in the light of the unemployment situation already mentioned, this implies that a woman may have to sacrifice a loaf of bread for her children so that she can access a court. Court charges are another impediment to those with limited finances. Once in court, a woman has to be in the financial position to afford legal representation, which is also costly.

Women are the largest group affected by poverty, and they are poorer than men are. Most poor women are black and live in the rural areas. They have to travel long distances to get to the police stations and courts, which means they have to leave their homes unattended for long periods. How do we address this situation – with childcare facilities or subsidies? Another complication related to access is support services for illiterate people. For example, although an effort is made to help women fill out forms for maintenance support in some centres, this situation unfortunately does not apply throughout the country.

Legal measures

Much has been done to pass equitable gender legislation, yet there still are laws on the statute books that marginalise sectors of the population. For example, the property of black women who were married under customary law before the Recognition of Customary Marriages Act came into effect, continue to be regulated by customary law. Customary law denies women and children, other than those who are heirs, access to inheritable property. This situation should not be allowed to continue in a democratic country.

There are plans to make laws that will improve women's chances of realising their constitutional right to work. Another measure with potential positive spin-offs for women is the idea to introduce a system to track down maintenance defaulters to bring them to book.

Likhapha Mbatha is based at the Centre for Applied Legal Studies at the University of the Witwatersrand





Local (government) is not all *lekker*

By CELESTE FORTUIN
Local government trainer

The year 2004 seems to be a very special year, with many signs that democracy is slowly beginning to establish itself in our society. The media and mainstream discourses are overflowing with images, expressions, opinions and celebrations of what is considered the success story of our democracy.

In reflecting on the developments in local government since 1994 from a gender perspective, thinking about victories, challenges and opportunities, a particular challenge is how the national government's commitments on gender, governance and equality have been taken up in other spheres of government. South Africa adopted the Beijing Platform for Action and ratified Cedaw and the SADC Declaration on Gender, among others. The subsequently established National Gender Machinery resulted in Offices on the Status of Women (OSWs) being set up at national and provincial level. Their scope is national, provincial and regional government departments, with key tasks including establishing Gender Focal Points in all government departments and overseeing the gender-sensitive development and implementation of government policies.

The relationship between the municipalities and provincial OSWs is not as clearly defined as in other spheres of government. This becomes evident when we look at institutional frameworks for gender mainstreaming within local government. During 2002-3 Getnet worked with the Northern and Eastern Cape OSWs and held



gender hearings in all the districts of these provinces. It then emerged that most municipalities still do not have clearly defined institutional frameworks for gender mainstreaming, Gender Focal Points or gender structures.

Institutional guidelines

The National Policy Framework on Women's Empowerment and Gender Equality, developed by the OSW and adopted by Parliament in 2000, provides guidelines on an institutional framework for gender mainstreaming, which resembles the current structure of our national gender machinery. However, the framework does not speak directly to the fit of local government into the machinery, merely referring to Salga as a local government role-player, with the result that municipalities still do not have a clearly defined framework for gender mainstreaming, or defined relationships with the OSW and the Commission on Gender Equality.

The national policy assumption appears to be that the guidelines for institutional frameworks can be easily duplicated within the local sphere of government. But local govern-

ment has proved to be more complex in its institutional arrangements than other spheres of government. One reason for this complexity is that politics are much more dynamic in local government. By-elections and floor crossing by councillors have seen regular changes in political power and with each change municipalities have to re-adjust to policy changes. In the absence of clear guidelines for gender mainstreaming, councillors and officials have ignored, sidelined or struggled with the issue of gender.

In addition metropolitan municipalities have more complex structures than the average local or district municipality. Metro councils often have 50 or more sub-directorates that provide services to communities. The conclusion is that all levels of municipalities – local, district and metro – have their own particular challenges when it comes to transforming themselves into more gender-sensitive institutions of governance.

Mainstreaming gender in governance

Through adopting the Beijing Platform for Action, the government committed itself to gender mainstreaming as a strategy to

achieve gender equality. This implies taking steps towards equal access and full participation in power structures and decision-making for women, and also advancing women's leadership capacity. The integration of gender in all policies and programmes is promised.

Working with councillors and officials 10 years after democracy, I am often still asked why we talk about gender and local government in the same breath. Municipalities are well supplied with gender activists who can answer this question, yet it is particularly at management and council level that this question remains unanswered. Gender activists are often not found at senior management level, and thus have limited power to implement gender work. Also, women councillors often get tasked with gender portfolios,

mostly because gender work is still seen as "women's work". It therefore becomes important to reflect on the principles guiding gender work in municipalities, and the reasons for doing the work.

The role of men is crucial for the gender transformation of municipalities. If councillors and officials do not share the understanding that gender issues are as important to men as it is to women, then resistance and reluctance to gender issues could well be the order of the day. It becomes important to create dialogue in municipalities surrounding gender issues.

Legislation

Legislation is one of the options that could assist in making local government gender equitable. IDP regulations make

it compulsory for municipalities to plan in this way, especially since this has been legislated in the Municipal Systems Act. Just imagine the impact of a law that compels municipalities to establish gender structures and engender their policies and planning!

Legislation sets standards and norms against which we can measure whether citizens are equal, free and protected. Getnet believes that the current legislation pertaining to local government does not inherently discriminate against women, but special measures are needed to ensure that municipalities transform their structures and services to address gender inequalities and deliver services in an equitable, sustainable manner. We therefore urge reviews of legislation to incorporate gender measures.

Municipal case studies produce valuable lessons

One of the high points of Getnet's local government programme in recent years was research into the work municipalities are doing to foster gender equality. Known as the "Best Practice Project", this initiative aimed to acknowledge the efforts of municipalities and to develop case studies to assist other municipalities in mainstreaming gender in the functions and activities of local government.

The research was undertaken during 2003 with four municipalities in the Western Cape and Eastern Cape – Nelson Mandela Metropolitan and Makana in the Eastern Cape and Cape Town and Plettenberg Bay in the Western Cape.

Some of the key learnings regarding *gender-disaggregated information* were:

- It is important to collect information in this way, including statistics. For example, when describing the rate of poverty in a municipality data must be given for men and women. This helps the council to allocate resources to the affected group.

- It is useful for impact assessment with men and women.

- It assists with the development of gender indicators.

Gender analysis in programme planning and project design was found to be important because:

- It compels the organisation to include values such as "non-sexism" in its mission statement and promotes commitment to correcting gender imbalances.

- It can be used to monitor progress made with redress.

- It enables the organisation to have "women" among its key clients.

- It enables the organisation to include issues affecting women's empowerment in its plans, including the gendered division of labour.

Important lessons in formulating a *gender policy* were that:

- The inclusion of women's groups and other civil society organisations in the early stages of the process strengthens the organisation's gender policy because it will then carry the voices and needs of "real people".

- It is vital to have a "political will" demonstration of commitment from top management – councillors as well as administration.





Africa must build capacity for EDT with women

By ELSTON RONNIE SEPPIE

Electronics is a male-dominated domain, so it was not surprising that the symposium of the Electronic Distance Training on Sustainability In African Local Government (Editosia) project had no specific gender focus.

A number of delegates attempted to draw attention to this and the conference acknowledged it as a weakness, but the fact that the symposium held in Namibia in May was the last phase of a three-year project presented sufficient reason for maintaining the status quo.

Editosia, ranging across Africa and Europe, was aimed at influencing policy impacting on electronic distance education in local government. The symposium's key findings included that local governments should

play a key role in the use and design of EDT material, as well as in approaches and techniques, and that implementation should be appropriate to country dynamics and conditions. A gendered approach to the conference conclusions would imply that EDT's value for local government will be limited if the participation of women is not elevated.

Elston Ronnie Seppie is a member of Getnet's panel of trainers.

SADC Training October 2004, Cape Town

Getnet is hosting a gender training workshop for representatives of countries in the SADC region.

Target group: The workshop comprises an all-inclusive training package for persons responsible for gender mainstreaming in organisations and institutions. It is targeted at entry level gender co-ordinators or gender focal persons, and persons responsible for gender in regional NGOs.

Areas of focus: The workshop will cover gender awareness; gender planning frameworks and tools of analysis; intersections between gender, HIV/Aids, gender-based violence and poverty; regional gender machinery and policy frameworks; gender analysis of budgets.

Getnet staff moving on

The Board, staff and associates wish to thank Pethu Serote (director) and Celeste Fortuin (trainer) for the invaluable contribution they have made not only to Getnet as an organisation but to the broader gender and development sector. They have made an immense contribution to Getnet's mission to transform and equalise the power relations between men and women in our country.

Bringing men into the picture

By RODNEY FORTUIN

When I first stepped into Getnet's Indaba workshop held at the Strand in April I did not have a clue what to expect, but I ended up being pleasantly surprised at what I learnt during the four days of parallel training for men and women.

The "Spiral of Life" exercise made a great impression on me. It helped me to see clearly how my upbringing influenced my attitudes and personal beliefs about gender. Sharing these experiences with others made me aware that we have been socialised in a particular way and that who we are today is the result of what happened to us over a period of time.

It was extraordinary to discover how culture, religion and language shape our views of men and women. I did not know this at first, but I now accept that these elements do in fact play a major role in what I perceive of men and woman and their actions. The group activity on identity gave me a clear picture of why and how I classify other people.

Planning for change was exciting. The "Mountain Top Model" gave me a clear vision of where I need to be, and to see what effect I can have in the area of gender relations.

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This issue of Network News was funded by the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation and the Getnet Fund