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Introduction
The decade on the 1950s was a decade of turmoil in South Africa. In the urban areas, a strong alliance was being forged between racially oppressed groups and sympathetic whites. As a united front against apartheid, the non-racial Congress Alliance, formed from previously organize-TTy-based and worker groups, defied unjust laws, oonducted campaigns against forced removals under the Group Areas Act and against inferior "Bantu" education for African children. The alliance organized bus boycotts, stay-at-homes, and rent strikes in the African townships. Perhaps the most significant Congress campaign of the decade was the campaign against the pass laws, and in particular, the extension of reference books to African women. No other campaign was carried out on such a massive scale or was sustained over as many years. No other campaign struck at the very root of the apartheid system.

Protest against the pass laws was not an innovation of the 1950s. The African National Congress (ANC)had been organizing opposition to the legislation since its founding in 1912. The significance of the campaigns of the 1950s lay in the adoption of new strategies for bringing about fundamental change. For the first time, anti-pass protesters employed techniques of mass action, strikes, boycotts, and civil disobedience on a wide scale, abandoning the
constitutional appeals, petitions, and deputations that had characterized ANC protests for more than 40 years. Efforts at gentle persuasion and pleas for patient waiting were cast aside as remnants of a bygone era. The degree of popular involvement in the anti-pass actions and the level of spontaneous activity in the rural areas was unparalleled in any other period of South African history. Finally, in the 1950s, the primary catalysts of the anti-pass protests were not the traditional male leaders, but thousands of African women, many of whom had never before been involved in political protests or demonstrations.

In the urban areas, the women's campaigns were primarily organized by the ANC Women's League and the nonracial Federation of South African Women. In the rural areas, resistance was largely spontaneous. Although the Government charged that the unrest was due to the work of "outside agitators", the rural women were, for the most part, acting on their own initiative and according to their own understanding of how the extension of the pass laws would affect their lives. While women who worked in the urban areas brought home new tactics, insights, and information when they returned to the reserves, they were contributing to a momentum that had gathered on its own.

The militancy of the women, their level of organization in the urban areas, and the ease with which they discarded their expected subordinate role came as a shock to many of the men and even to some of the women. Although women were deeply involved in all of the Congress campaigns of the 1950s, the leadership of the Congress organizations was dominated almost exclusively by men. As the women's campaigns gathered strength, the ANC National Executive Committee pointedly acknowledged the role of women in the liberation struggle. It was obvious, from the wording of its statements, that the importance of women to the struggle had not previously been assumed. In its report to the Annual Conference of 17-18 December 1955, the ANC National Executive Committee remarked that the ANC Women's League, which was formed in part to "take up special problems and issues affecting women", was not just an auxiliary to the African National Congress, and we know that we cannot win liberation or build a strong movement without the participation of the women.

(emphasis added)

African women played a leading role in the resistance to pass legislation because of the particular way in which influx control measures, implemented through the pass system, affected their position in society as well as African family life. On the basis of race, African women suffered the same disabilities as African men. Because of their sex, however, they carried a double burden. At the bottom of the social and economic hierarchy, African women were predominantly employed in low-paying, unskilled jobs. Because of the tenuous nature of their employment - largely in the domestic service and informal sectors - African women were particularly vulnerable to removal from the urban areas as "idle" Africans or "superfluous appendages". Legal constraints made it far more difficult for African
women than men to acquire urban residency rights, accommodations in the urban areas, and land in the African reserves. Influx control laws, and by extension the pass system, were intentionally used by government officials to bar African women from the urban areas and to confine them to the African reserves. Life in the reserves was an existence of poverty and hardship for the vast majority of the people. Enforced landlessness had transformed African men from self-reliant peasants to migrant laborers in the "white" areas. Influx control laws meant that their families were forced to stay in the reserves, where the men could visit them once a year. The burden of raising children under such conditions, which fell almost exclusively on the women, became increasingly arduous. As the soil lost its fertility and landlessness became more acute, the reserve economy deteriorated. The women's role as cultivator and provider eroded, and with it, women's social status. Rather than being major contributors to the families' livelihood, women became increasingly dependent upon male earnings. However, these earnings were neither large nor secure. In many cases, money from the "white" areas came sporadically or not at all.

During the period that women were free from pass law restrictions, some had been able to skirt the influx control regulations and join their husbands in the urban areas. Some found menial jobs which, although low-paying and insecure, were more lucrative than subsistence farming. These women knew that the extension of passes to women would increase the effectiveness of the influx control system. No longer would there be an exit from the reserves, a way for women to earn money to feed their children or to live with their husbands in the urban areas. As a result, when in 1952 the Government announced that African women would be forced to carry passes, the women responded with vehemence. Subjection to pass law controls would destroy their last remaining hope - their freedom of movement. Unlike African men, the women who resisted these laws had nothing further to lose. Protesters in the rural areas were not risking the loss of urban residency rights, houses, or jobs. They could afford to be bold where men were apt to be hesitant. The women could only gain by their militancy.

Resistance to the pass laws was the overwhelming, but not the only issue of the 1950s. African women became involved in a number of campaigns focusing on issues that affected their ability to care for their children and to keep their family unit together. They protested the pass laws, "Bantu" education, rent hikes, bus fare increases, forced removals of African townships, government-owned beer halls that soaked up their husbands' wages and laws that prevented them from selling home brew, an important source of income for many women. In the rural areas, women resisted the Government's "betterment" schemes, which included the mandatory culling of precious livestock, required women to fill and maintain cattle dipping tanks without pay, and enforced soil conservation measures which dispossessed many families of arable land.

Although the disabilities imposed by apartheid laws were onerous for every African, in many ways, the burden fell heaviest on the women. In order to comprehend the forces that propelled these women into action in the 1950s, it is
necessary to understand the social and economic context of their resistance. Perhaps the single most significant factor contributing to their hardship was the deterioration of the economy in the reserves, where the majority of African women were compelled to live. As a result of this economic decline, an increasing number of able-bodied men were leaving the reserves as migrant laborers. The outflow of labour from the reserves and the destruction of the family unit intensified the hardships born by African women.

I. South African Land Policy

The segregation of the African population in "native reserves" was not extensively practiced in South Africa until the 19th century. During the first half of the century, African reserves were introduced in the eastern part of the Cape Province. Small, African-occupied areas were interspersed among white farms, fragmenting the hostile Xhosa population and ensuring the white settlers a ready supply of cheap labour. Basing its policy on the Ciskei model, Natal established the first thorough-going African land policy in the late 1840s. By the last quarter of the 19th century, the Transvaal and the Orange Free State had followed suit, making similar efforts at systemizing their African land policies. However, it was not until after the formation of the Union in 1910 that any attempt was made to apply such policies strictly and uniformly throughout the country. After 1910, African land rights were increasingly restricted. The primary proponents of the new policy were large and small-scale white farmers. Drought, cattle disease, and the devastating effects of the Analo-Boer War had displaced thousands of Afrikaner farmers from their land and disrupted the agricultural sector of the economy. These conditions, together with the closing of the frontier in the second half of the 19th century, had created a tremendous land hunger among the poorer class of white farmers. While large-scale land-owners claimed vast amounts of land which they did not occupy, thousands of poor whites farmed small, frequently sub-economic plots.

In an effort to reserve more land for themselves, white farmers of the lower strata pushed for greater restrictions on African land rights. Like their poorer counterparts, wealthy capitalist farmers had a stake in the limitation of African land rights. Throughout the Union, large commercial farmers were suffering from a severe labour shortage. In spite of the Government's efforts to force Africans into wage labour through the imposition of taxes, many Africans were able to produce enough to feed their families and meet revenue payments without resorting to the sale of their labour power. If African land rights were restricted, thousands of sharecroppers, tenant farmers, and individual landholders would be forced to enter the wage labour force. Large-scale capitalist farmers would be the major beneficiaries of such a policy.

In order to compel Africans to sell their labour to white commercial farmers and to alleviate their competition with poorer whites, the Parliament passed the Natives Land Act in 1913. The Act represented a first attempt to apply a single African land policy to the whole country.
Land Act, approximately nine million hectares of land were scheduled as African reserves. Unless granted permission by the Governor General, Africans could not acquire land from non-Africans in the rural areas outside the African reserves. Neither could non-Africans purchase land within the scheduled areas. Purportedly, the Natives Land Act was aimed at African, rather than white landholders outside the reserve areas. Those Africans most affected by the Act included share-croppers and tenant farmers, who had acquired the right to use "white" land, and African landowners, who, until 1913, had been permitted to purchase land in Natal and the Cape Province, and between 1902 and 1913, in the Transvaal and the Orange Free State. In spite of the stated purpose of the Act, the new legislation was also detrimental to the interests of small-scale white farmers - a group that had staunchly supported its enactment. By preventing whites from purchasing land in the scheduled areas, the Natives Land Act eliminated the possibility of capital accumulation for thousands of poor white farmers. At the same time, the removal of African farmers from "white" land and their employment as wage labourers on white farms increased the profitability of the larger commercial farms. No longer competitive, thousands of white small-farmers were forced out of business. As their farms were swallowed up by larger ones, "white" land was concentrated in fewer and fewer hands. Class differentiation within the white agricultural sector became increasingly rigidified. Among the Africans, landowners were the most obvious targets of the Natives Land Act. However, share-croppers and "squatters" (i.e., rent-paying or labour tenants) were also victimized. Until 1913, the latter two groups were able to "acquire" land from whites on a temporary basis in all parts of the Union. Share-croppers, who usually possessed their own plots and oxen, were among the more prosperous African farmers. In exchange for the right to use a white farmer's land, share-croppers provided the farmer with half their yearly harvest. Squatters either paid cash rent or supplied their landlord with labour power in exchange for arable land and grazing rights. In theory, the Natives Land Act was meant to eliminate both sharecropping and tenant farming. Accordingly, the former had virtually disappeared by the 1930s. However, for several decades after 1913, large landowners continued to let their land to African tenants with little hindrance. Those farmers who had adequate labor supplies and large tracts of land would produce far more than they could sell if they worked all their holdings. It was to their advantage to rent otherwise fallow land to African tenants. Thus, even after the passage of the Natives Land Act, the practice of squatting was perpetuated. Once again, large landowners profited at the expense of both small-scale white and African farmers. Although class differences were to remain in the rural areas, the implementation of the Natives land Act had a levelling effect on the African peasantry. The relatively prosperous class of African farmers who owned stock and maintained a standard of living little different from that of many poor whites, was almost completely decimated. Given a choice between entering into wage labour contracts with their former landlords, which often entailed the loss of their
stock and leaving the white farms, many share-croppers chose to leave. Hundreds of dispossessed Africans sought refuge in the African reserves or employment in the mines and towns.10

From the outset, the Government acknowledged that the African population could not possibly survive on the amount of land allocated to it. In 1916, the Beaumont Commission estimated that the area provided for African occupation by the Landlctct of 1913 could accommodate no more than one-half of the African population. In its report of 1930-1932, the Native Economic Commission wrote that the "evidence appears to show that in no Reserve is it possible for the Natives demiciled there, with their existing methods of production, to maintain themselves and meet the calls upon them for money payments, such as that represented by the General Tax, without many leaving the Reserves to work in the service of Europeans in other parts of the country12."

The Native Affairs Commission of 1937-1938 described the reserves as "oongested, denuded, overstocked, eroded and for the most part in a deplorable condition." 13

By the 1930s, African landlessness had become so acute that even the Government recognized the need for reform. The nascent industrial economy could not begin to absorb the tremendous influx of African labour. Concerned about the potentially explosive situation created by the crowing number of Africans unemployed in the urban areas, the Government embarked upon policies designed to stem the rural exodus. In accordance with this plan, the Native Trust and Land Act was passed in 1936, adding approximately 6.2 million hectares (the "released areas") to the reserves.

In theory, the African reserves, including both the "scheduled" and "released" areas, were to constitute 13 per cent of the total land area in South Africa. However, by the early 1960s, 31 per cent of the designated area had yet to be turned over to the African peasantry. The reserves, which in fact constituted only nine per cent of the South African landmass, were meant to accommodate 11 million Africans. By contrast, three million whites were to own and occupy the remaining 91 per cent of the country.

Like so many of the Government’s "reform" measures, the Native Trust and Land Act provided meager benefits to one class of Africans at the expense of the vast majority. While state Africans in the reserve areas were able to buy newly released land or to use plots purchased by the South African Native Trust, poorer Africans were left out of the land scramble. Similarly, wage labourers and tenant farmers in the "white" areas were adversely affected by the new law. A provision of the 1936 Land Act enabled the Government to remove labour tenants and other squatters from white-owned farms, a task left unfinished by the Land Act of 1913. Women, children, and the elderly were sent to the overcrowded reserves while able-bodied adult males were hired as contract labourers.

Land scarcity in the African areas was further aggravated by the
Government's policy of expelling unemployed Africans from the "white" urban areas and forcing them into the reserves. The Natives (Urban Areas) Act of 1923, as amended, allowed the Government to remove from the urban areas all Africans it deemed "superfluous" to the economy, "idle", or "undesirable". Africans falling into these categories - predominantly women, children, and the elderly were added to the growing class of landless in the African reserves.

II. The Deterioration of the African Reserves
As the 1940s drew to a close, landlessness in the reserves had reached catastrophic proportions. The small amount of land available to Africans was concentrated in fewer and fewer hands. As the gap between the "haves" and "have-nots" grew wider, class differentiation in the reserves became noticeably more pronounced. In 1948, the Native Laws (Fagan) Commission found that nearly one-third of all families in the Ciskei reserve owned no arable land. For those who owned land, the average holding was so small and so badly eroded that it could not support an average African family. The stock grazing on such a land was inevitably of poor, sub-economic quality. More than 60 per cent of the families in the Ciskei owned five head of cattle or less. Of these, 29 per cent had no cattle at all. While some peasants owned as many as 100 head of cattle and 1,000 sheep, thousands possessed no stock of any kind.

Similar conditions prevailed throughout most of the reserve areas. In 1946, the Social and Economic Planning Council reported that thousands of families in the reserves owned neither land nor livestock. In the Rustenburg district of the Transvaal, for example, a few Africans owned 200 head of cattle or more. One chief was known to graze 5-6,000 head of cattle on tribal land, while many families had no stock at all. The unequal distribution of livestock was even more striking in the case of smaller animals. In the seven districts of the Transkei, 44 per cent of the families owned no cattle and 47 per cent had no sheep or goats. In one location, which the Planning Council considered to be representative, three out of 1,000 livestock owners possessed 70 per cent of the sheep and 50 per cent of the cattle. By the-1950s, the Tomlinson Commission reported, 12.7 per cent of the reserve families earned 46.3 per cent of the total income accrued inside the reserves.

The land and livestock crisis in the African areas was part of a larger, more fundamental problem - the overall deterioration of the reserve economy. In its 18-volume report released in 1954, the Tomlinson Commission found that nearly one-third of the Transkei reserve was badly eroded, and 44 per cent was moderately eroded. Only 26 per cent of the territory was not eroded at all. Throughout all of the reserve areas, erosion and overgrazing had drastically reduced soil fertility. Crop and livestock yields were extremely low and of poor quality. Farm incomes were below subsistence levels. By the 1950s, African production of the staple food crop, maize, was at an all-time low. According to the Union census of 1949-50, maize production in the reserves averaged 2.47 bags per morgen (1 morgen = 21.17 acres), while the average white farm produced 6.98 bags per morgen. In the scheduled areas targeted by government "betterment"
scherres, families were allotted an average of 3.6 arable morgen and produced an average of nine bags of maize per year. However, the Tomlinson Commission estimated that the average family of six required 15 bags of maize per year in order to survive. Thus, 40 per cent of the income of even these relatively privileged farers had to be earned outside the reserves - solely in order to feed their families, let alone to provide income for taxes, clothing, medical care, and education.

As a result of sub-economic productivity in the reserves, African diets were generally deficient and their standards of health and living far below the national average. In 1945-47, estimated life expectancy for Africans was 36 years for males and 37 years for females - approximately 30 years below the average for whites. Death from starvation and malnutrition-related diseases was widespread, particularly among children. In 1943, the National Health Services Commission found that African infant mortality in the reserves ranged from 150 to 600-700 per 1,000 life births. Ten years later, the Tomlinson Commission reported that an estimated "one-fifth to one-quarter of the children born, die within the first year of life".

Successive South African governments agreed that the erosion of the reserve economy had to be arrested. An increase in reserve production was required to subsidize the low wages of migrant labourers and to stem the flow of Africans into the towns. The abolition of the reserve system, as a means of freeing up land for African settlement, was automatically ruled out. The addition of large tracts of land to the African areas was likewise rejected as politically unviable. Instead, during the 1940s and 1950s, both the United and Nationalist Party Governments opted to increase the productivity of the land already included within the scheduled and released areas. In accordance with this plan, government-run "betterment" schemes were introduced throughout the African reserves.

The "betterment" schemes further entrenched class differentiation in the African areas. Rather than dividing the reserves into thousands of sub-econmic plots and promoting conditions of "shared poverty", the Government increased the size of landholdings and decreased the number of landholders. Only a fraction of the reserve population would be included in the "betterment" schemes. Their landholdings would expand - at the expense of the majority of the reserve population.

The "betterment" scheme concept was a cornerstone of the Tomlinson Commission's recommendations. In order to increase the productivity of the reserves, the Commission recommended that the reserve population be divided into two classes: a farming class, whose members would be allotted plots of approximately 52.5 morgen; and a non-agricultural class, whose members would be prohibited from owning stock or cultivating arable land. Enforced landlessness for some would alleviate pressure on the land, and create a reserve supply of labour for industry, commerce, white farms, and mines.
The Tomlinson Commission proposed that only 307,000 farming families approximately 51 per cent of the reserve population - be permitted to farm in the African areas. These relatively privileged Africans were to be taught improved farming methods, including soil conservation, afforestation, and veld reclamation. Their plots were to be fenced in to prevent over-grazing by roaming cattle, and their own herds of cattle were to be culled. Overstocking, rather than lack of land, was considered to be the primary cause of soil erosion.

Not only did the "betterment" schemes help to rigidify class stratification in the reserves, they served to polarize African rural society. While some Africans welcomed the Government's "rehabilitation" projects - most notably chiefs, headmen, and other wealthy peasants who stood to benefit from them - the vast majority of the reserve inhabitants regarded them with hostility. The landless gained nothing from the "betterment" schemes; the Government's initiatives further entrenched their landless condition and ensured its perpetuation for generations to come. Many of the near landless were completely dispossessed and forced off homesteads that had been in their families for generations. The landless who owned cattle lost their grazing rights and were compelled to relinquish their stock. All cattle owners were obliged to cull their herds. The fencing of communal pasturage interfered with cattle grazing and posed serious hardships for all but the wealthiest Africans who had their own grazing plots.

The introduction of the "betterment" schemes was a major stimulus of rural unrest in the 1940s and 1950s. Responsibility for administering the Government's programs was delegated to chiefs and headmen (frequently Government appointees), who were the prime beneficiaries of the rehabilitation policy. The long-standing authority of chiefs over land allocation was distorted as tribal leaders degenerated into mere instruments of white minority rule. African chiefs, rather than white officials, forced peasants off the land, inosed the culling of livestock, and fined farmers who refused to co-operate. Those who collaborated with the white authorities in their destruction of the African peasantry were deeply resented by the masses of people. The conflict between these poorer groups of Africans and their chiefs, headmen, and councillors grew sharper as a result of the Government's rehabilitation policies. By co-opting the chiefs and headmen, the South African Government set the stage for the total disintegration of authority and the breakdown of law and order in the African reserves. It was not long before the people took matters into their own hands and rebelled against their tribal leaders.

III. African Women in the Rural Areas

Prior to the penetration of industrialization and the weakening of African social structures, African women in the rural areas fulfilled vital economic functions. Consequently, they held an important social status. While men were occupied with hunting, plowing, raising cattle, and hut building, women cultivated and harvested the crops and cared for the children and household. With the
erosion of the reserve economy, and the outward flow of male workers into the 'white' areas, the social status of African women declined while their workload more than doubled. By the 1950s, agricultural production in the reserves was undertaken almost exclusively by women. With half the adult male population absent at any given time, women were forced to prepare mud for hut walls, thatch for the roofs, and raise the cattle, as well as attend to their other household and agricultural chores. In effect, they performed the tasks of two generations of absent men as well as their own.

Although their responsibilities had increased, African women did not experience a parallel rise in status. Their material contribution to the survival of the household had declined as the wages of migrant workers contributed an ever-greater share. With their own basis of power and status eroding, African women became increasingly dependent upon their husbands, fathers, or other male relatives for the basic necessities of life.

The burden of landlessness was particularly onerous for African women. It was practically unheard of for unmarried women to have land rights, and the rights of married women were contingent upon the status of their husbands. The wife of a landless man rarely rose above his impoverished condition, even after his death. It was highly unlikely that local authorities would award a plot to the widow of a landless man. Even the widow of a prosperous farmer was not guaranteed land or income after he died. Local authorities made it a practice not to allocate land to women of any class, although there were some exceptions. While unmarried, childless, or impoverished women tended to remain landless, widows with dependent children might receive an allotment if their husbands had previously occupied Native Trust land.

If a widow were lucky enough to receive land, her plot was usually half the size of a plot normally allocated to a man. Although women were responsible for most of the work in the fields, they were considered to be less productive than men, and thus, entitled to less land.

Even a widow who had been granted permission to occupy her late husband's land was far from secure in her possession. She forfeited her right to use the land if she left it to supplement her income by working in the "white" areas or if she remarried. She was expected to earn enough money for quitrent and local tax as well as to feed and clothe her family from the produce grown on one or two morgen of land.* Such a task was physically impossible.

IV. African Women in the Towns

The acute land shortage and deteriorating productivity of the reserves largely coincided with the rise of South Africa's manufacturing sector. As a result, from the mid-1940s onward, an increasing number of Africans left the reserves for the urban areas. Landless men settled their families permanently in the urban areas, gradually breaking their ties to the rural economy. Married women followed their husbands to the cities, where they were incorporated into the wage economy or became part of the growing informal sector. The higher
wages of urban employment attracted both married and single women who, a few decades earlier, may have sought work on the white farms. Thus, between 1921 and 1946, the African population in the urban areas trebled, increasing by 57 per cent in the decade between 1936 and 1946. By 1951, nearly three-fifths of the African population had left the reserves for the "white" rural and urban areas. More than one-quarter was living in the towns and cities. The number of African women in the urban areas increased dramatically in the post-World War Two era. In 1921, the ratio of African women to men in the cities was one to five. By 1946, the ratio had increased to one woman for every three men. In spite of their numbers, African women in the urban areas composed but a fraction of the industrial workforce until the boom years of the 1960s. Many worked as seamstresses, laundresses, beer brewers, and street hawkers - activities of the informal sector that were frequently omitted from census calculations. Given these omissions, the census of 1936 found that 80 to 96 per cent of all "economically active" African women in the urban areas worked in "personal service", particularly as domestic servants. Such women had no social security or unemployment benefits, were not subject to minimum wage laws, and were prohibited from engaging in trade union activity. The small number of African women who entered the industrial workforce in the post-war period were concentrated in the clothing, textile, and food and canning industries. Generally, they replaced non-African women and African men in unskilled jobs and were paid considerably less than either of these two groups. Concentrated in different industries, working in the lowest job categories, and paid at different rates, African women were at the very bottom of the wage hierarchy. In 1956-1957, the average annual income of African women in secondary industry was R265.4, compared to R311 for African men, R858 for white women, and R1,885.8 for white men. As influx control measures became more stringent, even such menial jobs were placed beyond the reach of many African women.

V. Influx control
Historically, the African reserves, the migratory labour system, and influx control laws have served as the basis of South Africa's cheap labour system. In the post-war period, employers and politicians of the Nationalist Party continued to perpetuate the myth that the families of migrant labourers were largely supported by subsistence agriculture in the reserves, thus rationalizing the sub-economic wages paid to African workers. African men were paid barely enough to reproduce their own labour power, let alone to support their families. The policies of successive governments had made it clear that the place of African women was in the reserves, subsidizing the wages of their husbands who were working in the "white" rural and urban areas.

In order to regulate the number of African work-seekers coming into the urban areas, a series of "influx control" laws were passed. These laws were used to enforce one of the basic tenets of government policy: Africans were to remain in the urban areas only as long as their labour was needed. If they failed to find work
or lost their jobs, they were to be shipped back to the reserves - or to the white farms and mines, where labour resources had been severely depleted by African migration to the cities and towns. To be avoided at all costs was a situation in which thousands of impoverished and unemloyed Africans lived in close proximity to the white population - at the heart of the country's thriving industrial centers. The Nationalist Party Government, which came to power in 1948, was adamantly opposed to the creation of a permanent African urban population. English-speaking industrialists of the defeated United Party had argued that a settled African population in the urban areas was a prerequisite for an efficient and productive industrial labour force. The Nationalist Party however, catered to the interests of Afrikaner farmers who were in dire need of labour and demanded that African workers be diverted to the white farms. Nationalist Party constituents also included newly-established Afrikaner entrepreneurs who relied on the super-exploitation of African labour to make their farms competitive with those of well-established English-speaking whites, as well as Afrikaner workers who feared that "native inundation" into the urban areas would threaten their own low-paying jobs in the industrial sector.

The interests behind the Nationalist Party maintained that a settled African population in the urban areas would increase the cost of labour. African women would follow their husbands into the cities, bringing their children with them. The cities would become crowded with "unproductive" families -- non-working women, children, and old people who no longer had relatives to care for them in the reserves. Their ties to the reserves severed, African families would no longer produce their own food. The cost of supporting a family would increase tremendously. Additional food, clothing, rent, and transport costs would have to be incorporated into the workers' wages. No longer transient and without roots in the reserves, workers would begin to think of the towns and cities -- rather than the reserves - as their home. They would become more responsive to trade union organization and to political "agitators". They would begin to demand social and political rights in the "white" areas. IE the cheap labour system was to remain intact, the development of a settled African urban population had to be arrested. African women had to be forced to remain in the reserves, and a more rigid, fool-proof system of influx control had to be developed.

The first major attempt to control the flow of Africans from the white farms and mines to the urban areas had occurred in 1923 with the passage of the Natives (Urban areas) Act. The purpose of the Act was to restrict Africans entering urban areas "proclaimed" by the governor-general to the number required by employers. By 1948, a total of 265 urban areas were designated "proclaimed" areas. In the proclaimed areas, most African men were required to carry registered service contracts or work-seekers' permits, producible on demand. Without such documents, they could be expelled from the urban areas. Work-seekers could remain unemployed in a proclaimed area for a prescribed period of time, after
which they were compelled to leave. Habitually unemployed, "idle, dissolute or disorderly" Africans could also be removed from the proclaimed areas. The Natives (Urban Areas) Act was repeatedly amended after 1923, making it increasingly difficult for Africans - especially women and children to enter and settle in the urban areas. As the reserve economy deteriorated, it became more, rather than less, difficult for Africans to leave the reserves and seek work in the growing industrial centres. Until 1930, the access of African women to the urban areas was relatively unrestricted. That year, however, the Urban Areas Act was amended to permit local authorities to prohibit the entry of African women into a proclaimed area unless they possessed "certificates of approval". Such certificates were granted to the wives and unmarried daughters of men who had been continuously employed in the proclaimed area for at least two years and for whom adequate accommodation was available. As a result, urban residency for African women was limited to those whose fathers or husbands were relatively better-off, those who had already achieved a level of stability and permanence in the urban areas.44 By barring the entrance of women and children whose male relatives were not "established", local authorities attempted to freeze the number of Africans in the urban areas to the current level (allowing for a natural increase in population), and to eliminate the families of jobless,

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homeless man. The Native Economic Commission of 1932 explicitly stated that, The Policy of the Urban Areas Act is to discourage the permanent settlement of Natives in towns. As a Native who has a family with him in a town is much more likely to become a permanent town-dweller than a single man, obstacles are placed in the way of women coming to towns.45 In 1937, the Urban Areas Act was again amended, this time empowering government authorities to expel African women from the urban areas. Certificates of approval for entrance into and residency in the urban areas were henceforth subject to dates of expiration. Such certificates could be cancelled on one month's notice.46 Municipalities were also empowered to remove all Africans "surplus" to labour requirements.47 In 1945, the Natives (Urban Areas) Consolidation Act was passed, bringing greater uniformity to the regulations guiding local authorities in the various proclaimed areas. Not until African women began to enter the urban areas in large numbers, did the Government subject them to influx control measures. Those who could be absorbed into the wage economy were, like African men, considered to be "labour units" and allowed to stay. For the most part, however, women, children, the aged and infirm were deemed "superfluous appendages" to the male "labour unit". As such, they belonged in the reserves, and were either denied entrance to or removed from the urban areas. In spite of the passage of restrictive legislation, African migration to the urban areas accelerated throughout the 1930s and 1940s. Largely left to the discretion of local authorities, influx control enforcement was lax and irregular. While authorities were permitted to prohibit the entry of African women into the
proclaimed areas after 1930, many failed to do so, and the number of permanently settled African women in the urban areas continued to increase. By the time the Nationalist Party came to power in 1948, an important demographic transformation had occurred.

In an effort to turn back the clock to an era when few Africans were permanent residents of the cities and towns, the Nationalist Party Government began to systematize and rigidly enforce the influx control laws. Under the Native Laws Amendment Act of 1952, all urban areas were designated proclaimed areas in which influx control measures were to be applied. Provisions for exemption from proclaimed status were made, but never granted. For the first time, African women who had been granted special permission to remain in an urban area were required to carry "a permit indicating the purposes for which and the period during which (she) may remain in that area". Permits were valid for one to twelve months. It was illegal for an employer to hire a woman who required a permit but did not have one. The Native Laws Amendment Act stipulated that Africans without permanent residency rights could visit an urban area for 72 hours without a permit.

However, if questioned, it was up to the African to prove that he or she had not been in the area longer than 72 hours. If such proof was not forthcoming, the African could be expelled.

The Native Laws Amendment Act further provided that local authorities could remove from the urban areas all Africans deemed "idle or undesirable". The Natives (Urban Areas) Amendment Act of 1956 allowed local authorities to expel Africans whose presence was deemed "detrimental to the maintenance of peace and good order". These catch-all phrases were frequently used to expel women and political "agitators" of both sexes.

Because of the nature of employment available to them, African women were particularly vulnerable to designation as "idle Bantu" and endorsement out of the urban areas. Any African woman 15 to 60 years of age, other than a 'bona fide housewife', could be deemed "idle" if she was unemployed though capable of working, even if she was supported by her parents. Furthermore, she was considered "idle" if she had, without good cause, three times rejected jobs offered to her by a labour officer; or twice within six months failed to hold a job for at least one month; or had been fired more than three times in one year. For the latter two cases to apply, the woman had to be at fault.

Section 10 (1) of the Natives (Urban Areas) Consolidation Act of 1945, as amended in 1952, 1955, and 1957, laid down the conditions under which Africans could remain in the urban areas for more than 72 hours. In order to qualify for exemption, an African had to prove that he or she:

a) had lived in the area continuously since birth; or
b) had worked there continuously for one employer for at least 10 years; or had lived there continuously for 15 years after legal entry. In both cases, the person had to prove that he or she had continued to reside in the area, had not been
employed outside the area, and had not during this period been sentenced to a fine exceeding R50 or to imprisonment of more than six months; or
c) was the wife, unmarried daughter or son under the age of 18 of a
person included in category (a) or (b), who, after lawful entry into the area,
ordinarily resided with the qualified person; or
d) had been granted special permission to remain in the area by a labour bureau
official, in the case of work-seekers, or by the appropriate local authorities in
other cases.
Because the objective of the law was to prevent the development of a settled
African population in the urban areas, it was designed so that the requirements for
permanent residency rights could be fulfilled by relatively

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few Africans. Those least likely to meet the requirements were African women.
Many women who had been born in the urban areas failed to qualify under
Section 10 (1) (a) because they had not resided there continuously since birth. It
was customary for women to stay with relatives in the reserves during the birth of
their children and to remain there for same months afterwards. Children
born in the reserves would likewise fail to qualify for Section 10 rights. A woman
who qualified for Section 10 rights through her parents, lost those rights if she
married a man who was not qualified for the same urban area.
Because many African women in the urban areas were not integrated into the
wage economy, few of them were able to qualify on the basis of continuous
employment with one employer for 10 years. Street hawkers, beer brewers, and
seamstresses and laundresses who worked on a free-lance basis could not qualify
under Section 10 (1) (b). Poorly-paid domestic servants rarely worked for the same
employer for 10 years. They changed jobs as soon as they received a better offer.
Frequently, domestic servants lost their jobs or were considered
temporarily "unemployed" when they gave birth.
In order to "ordinarily reside" with her husband or father, an African woman had
to live with him in accommodations authorized for families. She could not stay
with him in a single-sex hostel or on his employer's premises. If she resided with
him in authorized housing, but had entered the area illegally, she could be
endorsed out upon discovery, no matter how long she had lived ther.52 If family
housing was not available, even a woman who entered the area legally would not
be permitted to remain.
In the interests of preventing the growth of a permanent African urban
population, the Government intentionally ignored the need for family
accommodations. In 1951, the immediate shortage of family housing in the urban
areas was estimated at 167,328 units. Another 185,813 units were required to
account for the increase in population over the next decade. By 1962, the
housing shortage had grown to 353,000 units, and the waiting list for family
accommodations
was several years long. 53 Rather than providing housing for families, the
Government concentrated on building single-sex hostels for male "labour-units".
Once a man was allotted hostel space, he was considered a migrant worker. As
VI. Passes for African women
In 1952, the same year that African women became subject to strict influx control measures, the Natives (Abolition of Passes and Co-ordination of Documents) Act was passed. Under this Act, the numerous documents African men had been required to carry were replaced by a single document -- the reference book which contained information concerning identity, employment, place of legal residence, payment of taxes, and, if applicable, permission to be in the urban areas. The Act further stipulated that African women, at an unspecified further date, would for the first time be required to carry reference books. In

October 1962, the Government announced that all African women would be required to carry reference books as of 1 February 1963. After this date, it would be criminal offence for African women, as well as men, to be caught without a reference book. Moreover, it would be illegal for employers of either sex who did not possess a reference book.

The term "pass" was frequently used to describe any document which curtailed an African's freedom of movement and was producible on the demand of police or local authorities. Thus, residency permits, special entry permits, work-seekers permits, and reference books often fell into the general category of the "pass". Strictly speaking, permits were the documents issued to work-seekers and special cases under the terms of the Native Laws Amendment Act of 1952. Reference books, a government euphemism for the consolidated pass documents, were issued under the terms of the Natives (Abolition of Passes and Co-ordination of Documents) Act, also of 1952. Ultimately, all African women in the towns, cities, "white" rural areas, and reserves were required to carry reference books, while only certain women in the proclaimed areas were subject to the permit requirements. The issuance of permits in the urban areas began a few years before the issuance of reference books. African women declared that the permits were simply forerunners of reference books and treated them with equal contempt. The Government's first attempts to force women to carry passes and permits had been a major fiasco. In 1913, Government officials in the Orange Free State declared that women living in the urban townships would be required to buy new entry permits each month. In response, the women sent deputations to the Government, collected thousands of signatures on petitions, and organized massive demonstrations to protest the permit requirement. Unrest spread throughout the province, and hundreds of women were sent to prison. Civil disobedience and demonstrations continued sporadically for several years. Ultimately the permit requirement was withdrawn.

No further attempts were made to require permits or passes for African women until the 1950s. Although laws requiring such documents were enacted in 1952, the Government did not begin issuing permits to women until 1954 and reference
books until 1956. The issuing of permits began in the Western Cape, which the Government had designated a "coloured preference area". Within the boundaries established by the Government, no African workers could be hired unless the Department of Labour determined that coloured workers were not available. Foreign Africans were to be removed from the area altogether. No new families would be allowed to enter, and women and children who did not qualify to remain would be sent back to the reserves. The entrance of male migrant labourers would henceforth be strictly controlled. Male heads of households, whose families had been endorsed out or prevented from entering the area, were housed with migrant workers in single-sex hostels. The availability of family accommodations was so limited that the number of units built lagged far behind the natural increase in population.56

In order to enforce such drastic influx control measures, the Government needed a means of identifying women who had no legal right to remain in the Western Cape. According to the term of the Native Laws Amendment Act, women with section 10(1)(a), (b), or (c) status were not compelled to carry permits. Theoretically, only women in the Section 10(1) (d) category -- that is, workseekers or women with special permission to remain in the urban area - were required to possess such documents. In spite of their legal exemption, women with Section 10(1)(a), (b), and (c) rights were issued permits by local authorities, who claimed that the documents were for their own protection. Any woman who could not prove her (a), (b), or (c) status was liable to arrest and deportation.57

Soon after permits were issued to women in the Western Cape, local officials began to enforce the regulations throughout the Union. Reaction to the new system was swift and hostile. Even before the Western Cape was designated a "coloured preference area", Africans were preparing for the inevitable. On 4 January 1953, hundreds of African men and women assembled in the Langa township outside Cape Town to protest the impending application of the Native Laws Amendment Act. Delivering a fiery speech to the crowd, Dora Tamana, a member of the ANC Women's League and a founding member of the Federation of South African Women, declared,

We, women, will never carry these passes. This is something that touches my heart. I appeal to you young Africans to come forward and fight. These passes make the road even narrower for us. We have seen unemployment, lack of accommodation and families broken up because of passes. We have seen it with our men. Who will look after our children when we go to jail for a small technical offence -- not having a pass?58

The women's campaign had begun. Throughout the Union, preparations were made for the first nonracial National Conference of Women, to be held in Johannesburg in April 1954.

VII. The Federation of South African Women
One hundred and forty-six delegates, representing 230,000 women from all parts of South Africa, attended the First National Conference of Women. It was at this conference that the Federation of South African Women was formed. Many of the
delegates to the conference were members of the various Congress organizations. AMong the African leaders of the Federation, a large number were trade unionists, primarily from the clothing, textile, and food and canning industries. Some were teachers and nurses, medDers of the small African professional class. Since fewer than one per cent of African working women were engaged in production work in the 1950s, the trade unionists, like the nurses and teachers, represented but a fraction of all adult African women.60 The involvement of the trade unionists proved to be critical, however. They contributed invaluable organizational skills and mobilizing techniques to the wane`s struggle.

Although the Federation of South African women included some individual members, it was primarily comprised of affiliated women's groups, African, Indian, "coloured", and white political organizations, and trade unions.61 According to its constitution, the objectives of the Federation were:

- To bring the women of South Africa together to secure full equality of opportunity for all women, regardless of race, colour or creed; to remove social and legal and economic disabilities;
- to work for the protection of the women and children of our land.62

The "Women's Charter", written at the first conference, called for the enfranchisement of men and women of all races; equality of opportunity in employment; equal pay for equal work; equal rights in relation to property, marriage, and children; and the removal of all laws and custom that denied women such equality. The Charter further demanded paid maternity leave, child care for working mothers, and free and compulsory education for all South African children.63 Although the Federation acknowledged that the primary task at hand was the struggle for national liberation, it warned that the struggle would not be won without the full participation of women. Applying a distorted version of "tribal" law, which had governed pre-industrial African society, South African courts continued to regard most African women as perpetual minors under the permanent tutelage of their male guardians. Women's property rights were severely limited and control over their own earnings minimal. The authors of the "Women's Charter" did not hesitate to deal with these issues. According to the Charter, laws governing African marriage and property relations had "lagged behind the development of society (and) no longer correspond to the actual social and economic position of women". As a result, "the law has become an obstacle to progress of the women, and therefore, a brake on the whole of society". The blame for "this intolerable condition" rested in part with "a large section of our menfolk" who refuse"" to concede to us women the rights and privileges which they demand for themselves". The Charter concluded:

We shall teach the men that they cannot hope to liberate themselves from the evils of discrimination and prejudice as long as they fail to extend to women complete and unqualified equality in law and practice... freedom cannot be won for any one section or for the people as a whole as long as we women are kept in bondage.64
The demands laid out in the "Wxren's Charter" were ultimately incorporated into the "Freedom Charter", adopted by the Congress of the People in Kliptown on 25 and 26 June 1955.

A major task of the Federation in succeeding years was the organization of massive protests against the extension of pass laws to women. Together with the ANC Wijmen's League, the Federation organized scores of demonstrations outside Government offices in towns and cities around the country. The first national protest took place on 27 October 1955, when 2,000 women of all races marched on the Union Buildings in Pretoria, planning to meet with the Cabinet ministers responsible for the administration of apartheid laws. The Minister of Native Affairs, Dr. Verwoerd, under whose jurisdiction the pass laws fell, pointedly refused to receive a multiracial delegation.

Less than a year later, the Women's League and the Federation of South African Women organized a second major demonstration -- this time focusing exclusively on the pass laws. On 9 August 1956, 20,000 women from all parts of South Africa staged a second march on the Union Buildings. Prime Minister Strijdom, who had been notified of the women's mission, was not there to receive them. In lieu of a meeting, the women left bundles of petitions containing more than 100,000 signatures at the Prime Minister's door. Outside the Government building, they stood silently for 30 minutes, their hands raised in the Congress salute. The women concluded their demonstration by singing freedom songs, including a new one composed especially for the occasion:

Wathint' abafazi, Strijdom!
Wathint' inrbokodo uzo kufa!
Now you have touched the women, Strijdom'
You have struck a rock
(You have dislodged a boulder!)
You will be crushed!

African women fought the pass laws as they had fought no other issue. Passes were the symbol of their deepest oppression. It was through the pass laws that the influx control system was enforced. It was influx control that turned their husbands into migrant workers and made them into widows in the reserves. Passes deprived them of the basic right to live with their husbands and to raise their children in a stable family unit. Throughout the 1950s, an average of 339,255 African men were convicted each year for pass laws violations. If passes were extended to African women, that figure would more than double. If mothers were arrested as well as fathers, the women asked, who would care for the children?

The call-to-action flyers of the Women's League and the Federation described in vivid detail the plight of the African people under the pass laws. A flyer printed in 1957 carried the following challenge: "Who knows better than any African woman what it means to have a husband who doesn't carry a pass?" The flyer continued-.
Passes mean prison; passes mean broken homes; passes mean suffering and misery for every African family in our country; passes are just another way in which the Government makes slaves of the Africans; passes mean hunger and unemployment; passed are an insult...

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The extension of passes to women constituted an "attack on ourselves, our mothers, sisters, children and families", the flyer concluded, an attack that would be fought with all the women's strength.70

Other documents were written in a similar vein. The petition left with the Prime Minister of 9 August 1956 described how, for hundreds of years, the pass laws had brought "untold suffering to every African family". Generations of women had experienced the meaning of the pass laws as they witnessed their husbands become victims of "raids, arrests, loss of pay, long hours at the pass office, weeks in cells awaiting trial, forced farm labour". They had seen their men subjected to "punishment and misery -- not for a crime, but for the lack of a pass". The extension of passes to women would mean the further destruction of family life, that children would be "left uncared for, helpless, and mothers (would be) torn from babies for failure to produce a pass". The petition concluded with a warning to the Prime Minister:

(African women) shall not rest until ALL pass laws and all forms of permits restricting our freedom have been abolished. We shall not rest until we have won for our children their fundamental rights of freedom, justice and security.71

VIII. Male Reactions to the Women's Campaigns

Few of the men were prepared for the women's militancy. According to creator Mary Benson, former Secretary-General of the African National Congress Walter Sisulu, witnessed the march of 20,000 women on the Union Buildings in Pretoria. Afterwards, he asked in amazement: "How could they dare?"72 Moses Mabhida, a member of the African National Congress and an executive of the South African Congress of Trade Unions (SACU) felt that because of traditional male attitudes which perpetuated the subordinate status of women, "the society didn't expect women to participate in the way they did".73 Benson writes that the men were taken aback because women were protesting on a scale and with a spirit they had not begun to achieve. In her view, the women's militancy and the men's reticence could be explained by the different circumstances of their lives under the apartheid system. To illustrate her point, Benson quotes Lilian Ngoyi:

men are born into the system, and it is as if it has become a life tradition that they carry passes. We as women have seen the treatment our men have -- when they leave home in the morning you are not sure they will come back. We are taking it very seriously. If the husband is to be arrested and the mother, what about the child?74

In spite of their hate for pass regulations and all they connoted, African men had grown used to carrying the pass documents. For men, passes were just one more
aspect of the despised apartheid system. For women, the carrying of passes imposed a new restriction on their freedom, a freedom that men had never had. Women had more to lose by acquiescing to the new system and more to gain by fighting it.

If the men were slow to recognize the women's contribution, many became staunch supporters of their efforts. Albert Luthuli, President-General of the African National Congress, paid tribute to the women in August 1956. "Men the women begin to take an active part in the struggle as they are doing now, no power (p earth can stop us from achieving Freedom in our Lifetime", he declared."

In November 1956, the South African Congress of Trade Unions wrote to the Transvaal Provincial Conference of the Federation of South African Women, strongly supporting the women's actions:

It is the women of South Africa who have demonstrated to all progressive forces the true meaning of militancy and organization and we in the trade union movement are determined to follow your courageous example.76

The National Executive Committee of the African National Congress, after paying tribute to the women's anti-pass campaigns, criticized the men for not playing a more active role in that struggle:

The National Executive Committee regrets that men, who are even more affected by the pass laws, play the role of spectators while women were vigorously campaigning against the system. Men are called upon to enter this campaign unreservedly. The tendency of regarding this as a women's struggle must be forthwith abandoned.77

The National Executive Committee also directed the men to be more supportive of the women and their efforts. It was the duty of the men to:

...make it possible for women to play their part in the liberation movement by regarding them as equals, and helping to emancipate them in the hore, even relieving them of their many family and household burdens so that woman may be given an opportunity of being politically active.

The men in the Congress movement must fight constantly in every possible way those outoded customs which make women inferior and by personal example must demonstrate their belief in the equality of all human beings, of both sexes.78

By 1959, four years after the beginning of the women's campaigns, the men in the African National Congress had become ardent supporters of the women's efforts. For the Annual Conference of the African National Congress, held in December of that year, the men made a special banner which read, "Makabongwe Amakosikazi" - "We thank the ladies".79

VIII. The local Campaigns - Women Revolt in the Towns and Cities
Just as they had 40 years before, the warren's anti-pass protests of the 1950s began in the Orange Free State. The first actions were taken against the permit system. In June 1952, in the mining town of Odendaalrus, residents of the location were told that African warren who had not registered with the local authorities would be liable to arrest for violation of the Urban Areas Act. If women could not prove that they were employed, they could not remain in the Odendaalrus area. The authorities were acting illegally. While warren could be issued residency permits or permits of identification, under the terms of the Urban Areas Act, only African men were required to register their service contracts or status as work-seekers. African women were exempt from these regulations. Few of the residents were aware of this fact.

When the authorities tried to enforce their decree, rioting broke out. Stones were thrown. The car of the location superintendent was burned. Police fired into the crowd, killing one man and critically wounding a woman. Two days later, the location residents went out on strike, most of them failing to appear for work. Police from eight near-by towns raided the location with sten guns, pistols, batons, and tear gas, rounding up participants in the disturbances. By the end of the week, 71 men and warren had been detained. Forty-four warren and three men ultimately stood trial.

By 1954, the issuance of residency permits to African women was taking place in towns and cities throughout the Union. In February, a crowd of 700 women gathered outside the administration building in the New Brighton township of Port Elizabeth, demanding that the manager of native affairs take back all the residency permits he had issued. He refused, 100 women burned their permits, declaring that no more New Brighton women were willing to carry them.

In October 1955, while 2,000 women were marching on Pretoria, 1,000 were protesting in front of the native administration building in Durban. In Cape Town, hundreds of warren marched through the streets in protest of the permit regulations. The Minister of Native Affairs, Dr. Verwoerd, chose this moment to announce that reference books would be issued to African women beginning in January 1956.

In response to the Government's actions, the African National Congress resolved in December 1955 to launch a massive campaign against the pass laws. The goal of the campaign would be to educate people throughout the country concerning the implications of the pass system, and in particular, its effect on African women. In a letter to a provincial official of the African National Congress, Secretary-General Oliver Tambo described the extent of the African National Congress effort:

A systematic intensive organization must be undertaken; house to house, yard to yard, location to location, factory to factory, in the towns and likewise in the country.

In early 1956, the Government began issuing reference books to women in the remote rural areas, intentionally shying away from the larger towns.
and cities where the influence of the African National Congress was strongest. The authorities focused on the most vulnerable women - those in the reserves, on the white farms, and domestic servants isolated in the "white" urban areas. Only after the majority of African women had reference books would the Government attack the African National Congress strongholds. The African National Congress was not blind to the Government's tactics. At the Annual Conference of the African National Congress in November 1956, Transvaal President E.P. Moretsele warned that, ...

... plans are afoot to introduce Reference Books on the farm and country areas. The plan of the Government is perfectly clear. Alarmed by the resistance it is encountering in the cities and being aware of the weaknesses in the countryside, they have decided to isolate and encircle the areas where resistance is most effective. At present the passes are being introduced to women in the countryside and thereafter the cities will be attacked with all the viciousness and brutality for which the Nationalists are famous. It was not until March 1956 that the first reference books were issued. The first recipients were again women in the Orange Free State, this time in the town of Winburg. In April, hundreds of Winburg women marched to the magistrate's court and charged that many of those who had taken reference books had been tricked into accepting them. They proceeded to dump a sack containing 141 reference books on the ground and burned them. All of the women were arrested. Although it was not yet mandatory for women to carry reference books, it was illegal to destroy them.85

Protests spread throughout the country. Twelve hundred women demonstrated in Germiston, 2,000 in Johannesburg, 4,000 in Pretoria, and 350 in Bethlehem.86 In Durban, a deputation of more than 300 women marched to the native commissioner's office.87 Seven hundred Port Elizabeth women deposited more than 4,000 protest forms with the native commissioner - all of which were promptly turned over to the police.88 The people of Evaton were in the sixth month of a bus boycott to protest fare increases when the women's protest began. Rather than break the boycott, 2,000 women marched seven miles to the native commissioner's office, where they left 10,000 protest forms.89

On 9 August, while 20,000 women were descending on the Union Buildings in Pretoria, thousands of women were demonstrating in other parts of South Africa. In Cradock, 300 women assembled in front of the magistrate's office while a deputation presented the magistrate with a memorandum. Later in the day, a meeting of more than 1,000 people was held in the location to protest the pass laws. In Queenstown, women congregated outside the magistrate's court, while a deputation met with the native commissioner. An African policeman who witnessed the Queenstown demonstration later gave evidence in court. After providing the particulars of the meeting, Native Detective A. hxambuza remarked (as abbreviated in the court record), Passes not popular amongst Africans. I myself have a wife and
children, and if wife were to face same dangers of arrest as average African male, I would be most unhappy. I am aware that when first suggested that African women would carry passes, this caused resentment and heat amongst African women and their men-folk.90 Throughout the rest of the year, demonstrations against the pass laws took place in dozens of towns, cities, and rural villages. At its Second National Conference on 11 and 12 August 1956, the Federation of South African Women announced that 50,000 women had taken part in anti-pass demonstrations to date.91 In November, more than 1,000 women marched through the streets of Lichtenburg singing "Nkosi Sikelel' iAfrika", the African national anthem, and shouting: "We do not want your passes" When the police ordered them to disperse, the women refused. The police baton-charged the crowd. The women responded with stones. The captain ordered his men to fire, and two Africans were shot dead.92 On 2 December, the Transvaal Regional Conference of the Federation of South African Women resolved to organize a final mass protest at the Union Buildings in Pretoria. Anticipating the passage of legislation that would outlaw such demonstrations, the women had to act quickly. However, their plans were abandoned three days later when 156 people were arrested and charged with high treason in a massive country-wide swoop. Among the detainees were leading members of the African National Congress Women's League and the Federation of South African Women.93 Although there were no more national demonstrations, women continued to organize local protests against the pass laws. On 14 January 1957, the African women of Potchefstroom went on strike. Assembling in the location before dawn, they marched to the office of the location superintendent, singing and shouting as they went. At issue was the requirement that women carry permits stating their right to be in the area and the duration of that right. The women complained that visitors were arrested as soon as they stepped off the bus, before they could go to the superintendent's office where temporary permits were issued. Even adults who were visiting their parents had to get permits to enter the location -- or they were liable to arrest.94 In early February, 100 teenage girls walked out of the Venterdorp Secondary School when the principal announced that they were to be issued reference books. When the reference book team arrived, the school was nearly deserted. Of the 110 pupils, only 10 remained. By the end of the week, only 16 girls had returned to school.95 Later that month, women in the Randfontein locations refused to go to work in protest of the permit requirement. Police aned with sten guns patrolled the locations while women sang Congress songs.96 In May 1957, the Government began issuing permits of identification to women in the "western Areas" townships of Johannesburg. As these townships were slated for removal under the Group Areas Act, the authorities explained that they were trying to identify the women who had the "right" to be rehoused in the new Meadowlands location. The removal scheme had been hotly protested by many of the residents, and the permit requirement was one more slap in the face. On 12
May, 2,000 people attended an anti-permit meeting in the Sophiatown location. Four days later, 20,000 people met to send a delegation, escorted by 6,000 people, to the Johannesburg City Hall. The delegation met with the mayor and protested the issuance of "permits of identification" to African women. According to the Institute of Race Relations, the mayor agreed to "investigate the possibility of issuing exemption certificates to women who qualified for these".97

In the Northern Transvaal, the town of Pietersburg experienced uprisings throughout a five month period. In March, 2,000 women stormed the office of the native commissioner, protesting the issuance of residential permits. In June, 2,000 women stoned the officials who came to register them. When the officials returned in July, they were met by a crowd of 3,000 women who again forced their retreat.98 That same month, 61 Uitenhage women were convicted for holding an illegal procession against the pass laws.99 A crowd of 914 women in Standerton were intercepted and arrested on their way to see the mayor. However, the Institute of Race Relations reported, the women were all released on bail "as the white population would otherwise have been practically bereft of women servants".100

In October, women in Nelspruit attacked the car of a magistrate who had come to introduce the reference books. Five women were arrested, and 300 marched to demand their release. The police charged the crowd with batons, then opened fire. Four people were wounded. The following day, the women organized a strike that was 95 per cent effective. Again the police fired on the protesters, this time wounding eight. The location was raided and 140 people arrested.101

In October 1958, teams of officials from the Native Affairs Department arrived in Johannesburg to issue the first reference books to Johannesburg women. During the week of 21 to 28 October, 3,000 women protested, leading a procession to the City Hall. More than 2,000 were arrested. As the women clinted into the police vans, some of them shouted to the bystanders: "Tell our madams we won't be at work tomorrow!" Of these arrested, 1,300 were convicted and sentenced to fines of R3 or R50 or one to three months in prison.102

By the end of 1958, 45 anti-pass protests and demonstrations had taken place in South Africa.103 In its report to the Annual Conference of 13-14 December 1958, the National Executive Committee of the African National Congress paid tribute to the women protesters: "Everyone knows today that the African

Women are in the front line in the struggle against passes... We have been highly inspired with the courage and determination of our women folk".104 To the men, the National Executive Committee also made a special statement: We proudly salute the women freedom volunteers from Winberg, Lichtenberg, Zeerust, Sekhukhuniland, Uitenhage, Standerton, Durban, Pietermaritzburg and two-thousand Johannesburg women. Man must prepare themselves "Amadoda Makazi lungiselele kuba engayazi imini neyure". (Men must prepare themselves because they do not know the day and hour).105

IX. Revolts in the Lefurutse Reserve
The Federation of South African Women and the African National Congress women's League organized protests in the larger towns and cities, revolts in the rural areas were largely spontaneous. Irrefutably, the women's campaigns in the urban areas had some impact on the rural revolts. When workers in the towns and cities returned to the reserves, they took with them a new sense of political consciousness and militancy. Moreover, as news of the African National Congress activities spread, men and women who had had no prior contact with the organization frequently identified themselves with its resistance to apartheid laws. Nevertheless, even the National Executive Committee of the African National Congress admitted:

Nobody doubts that the activity of the people has in many areas been spontaneous. This is not something to be regretted. It should be looked upon as a challenge to the political movement to bring organization to the people's struggle. Yet throughout the 1950s, the National Executive Committee continually reiterated its warning that the African National Congress neglected the rural areas. In 1954, the National Executive Committee cautioned that "there is a danger of the African National Congress becoming an urban-based and urban-oriented organization". Contacts made with Africans in the reserves and white farming areas had not been "sufficiently strengthened by concretely and actively taking up the demands of the people of these areas and by incorporating into the programme of the Congress the immediate demands of the peasants and the farm labourers".

The following year, the National Executive Committee again remonstrated the organization: The Congress of the People showed clearly that the great gap in our organization is on the farms and in the reserves. We pass resolutions on the need to organize the peasantry, but fail to follow them up. The question of organizing the peasants must be tackled with resolve and energy.

Throughout 1957 and 1958, as supporters of the African National Congress and of the Federation of South African Women protested in the towns and cities, the rural areas in the western Transvaal were in utter turmoil. In close proximity to South Africa's major mining and industrial center, the Witwatersrand, the Lefurutse reserve of the western Transvaal was a source of migrant labour for South Africa's industries, farms, and mines. Prior to the extension of reference books to African women, the reserve had been an area without previous disturbances. By the end of the ordeal, the reserve and surrounding district had become a virtual military camp. Thousands of refugees had fled the area. Mole villages had been destroyed and deserted. The people who remained were subjected to nightly terror by police and the "bodyguards" of collaborating tribal authorities.

The disturbances began in March 1957, when the Reference Book Unit came to Zeerust, the largest town in the Mario District. Only eight women, from an
African population of 4,000, bought reference books. The vast majority refused to purchase the new documents. The Reference Book Unit moved on to Dinokana, the village of Chief Abraham Miloa. The native commissioner had presented the chief with an ultimatum - either he tell his weren to accept reference books or be deposed.

In the years preceding the issuance of reference books, Chief Moloa had fallen from favor with the South African Government. He had delayed in signing the Bantu Authorities Act, which parodied tribal government, making chiefs and headmen instruments of the white regime, rather than leaders who acted with the consent of their people. In 1955, the chief had been requested to persuade the villagers of Braklaagte and Leeuwfontein to abandon their homes and move to a new location. The area surrounding the two villages had been declared 'white', and the Government was determined to remove all 'black spots' within it. Chief Moloa's half-hearted efforts at persuasion had failed completely. It was rumored within government circles that the chief actually opposed the removal policy, the Bantu Authorities Act, and the introduction of "Bantu" education for African children.

Although Chief Moloa informed his people about the reference books, he refused to order the weren to buy them. When the Reference Book Unit arrived, only 76 out of 4,000 Dinokana woman purchased the books - less than one in 50. Most of the 76 were school teachers (employees of the Government) or wives of men who had been threatened with dismissal from their jobs if their wives did not cooperate.

Government retribution was swift. Chief Moloa was summarily deposed and ordered to leave the reserve. In the towns and cities of the Witwatersrand, the Bafurutse workers heard that trouble was brewing. Within days, the women had returned home and organized boycotts against a white trader sympathetic to the Government's efforts and against government schools, where teachers had taken out reference books. Cut of 1,200 students, less than 150 continued to go to classes. All of the boycotters were expelled and blacklisted. Their names were circulated by the Native Affairs Department to prevent them from continuing their education elsewhere. Ultimately, Dinokana's only school was forced to close down permanently.

The following weekend, 150 Bafurutse men arrived from Johannesburg. A meeting was held and a decision made: all of the reference books were to be destroyed. The weren went from door to door, collecting the documents. On Sunday, the reference books were brought to the public square and burned. Several thousand people gathered around the blaze, singing as the passes went up in smoke. That evening, as the men made their way to Zeerust to catch the train back to Johannesburg, they walked into a police cordon. One hundred men were arrested.

To avenge the arrests, the women in the village began to burn the huts of people loyal to the Government. The loyalists included a school principal, members of a church whose leader had advocated the acceptance of reference
books, police, and other employees and beneficiaries of the South African Government. On Monday, large-scale arrests began. By the end of the week, the jail in Zeerust was full.

The unrest that began in Dinokana quickly spread throughout the reserve. The women of Lekgophung took matters into their own hands and told their chief to be absent when the Reference Book Unit arrived. Although it was unheard of for women to give orders to a chief, the chief obeyed them. When the government officials arrived, the women informed them that they did not want passes. The authorities left without issuing a single reference book. 119

In the village of Supingstad, the women suddenly discovered that they had urgent business elsewhere. When the Reference Book Unit appeared, the village was deserted. In Braklaagte and Borakalalo, the books were refused without ceremony. The Reference Book Unit returned to Motswedi three times without issuing a single book - in spite of the chief's command that the women co-operate. 120 Only a handful of books were accepted in Leetfontein, where villagers speaking against the books were arrested. 121

In Gopane, the chief applied pressure, and approximately one-third of the women purchased reference books. When the village men came home for the Easter holidays, they were livid. The chief had no right to take action on an issue of such importance without consulting them. The reference books had to be destroyed. Immediately, police reinforcements were sent from Pretoria. A mobile column of police armed with automatic weapons entered the village with orders to arrest some 20 women suspected of burning their reference books. A crowd of more than 200 women surrounded the suspects and challenged the police to arrest them all. Two hundred and thirty-three women were arrested, and 400 offered themselves for trial. Mired in confusion, the case was finally abandoned. 122

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In the white farming district surrounding the reserve, the acceptance of reference books was predetermined. Unlike workers in the urban areas, farm labourers lacked protective support networks. They could not organize trade unions or form community organizations, uniting in their efforts to protect their rights. They could not initiate economic boycotts against discriminating or otherwise unfair merchants who, more often than not, were their own employers. Unlike the more fortunate peasants in the reserves, farm labourers did not possess the means of production; they had no land, tools, or livestock of their own. They were completely at the mercy of their employers for their economic security and well-being.

When reference books were introduced into the farming area near the Lefurutse reserve, the farmers frequently transported their female workers to the Reference Book Unit and waited while they purchased the books. In many instances, girls as young as 12 and 13 were issued reference books, even though they were three and four years under the minimum age of 16. Their employers then confiscated the books, informing the girls that if they ever left the farm, they would be hunted down by the police and put in jail. Without knowledge or means to challenge their employers' actions, these girls were often tied to the land for life. 123
As time wore on and relatively few women purchased reference books, the authorities increasingly resorted to coercion. Medical services became restricted in the reserve. Civil marriages could not take place if both partners could not produce reference books. Married men who attempted to pay their taxes were turned away if their wives had not purchased reference books. Unless their wives complied with the authorities, these men were liable to arrest, imprisonment, fines, and compulsory farm labour for non-payment of taxes.124

Women pensioners who had not purchased reference books were no longer allowed to collect their pensions in the villages. Instead, they were forced to make the long journey into Zeerust to pick up their payments. Suddenly, the bus service in Dinokana was discontinued. Villagers who had to travel to Zeerust were compelled to walk more than 30 miles to Zeerust and back. The Dinokana post office was closed down. No more telegrams could be sent or money received from relatives working in the cities.125

Collaborating chiefs, whose wives were usually among the first to take out reference books, refused to let women defiers reap their crops. Their land and farm implements were confiscated.126 Although it was not yet mandatory for women to carry reference books, those caught without them were subject to stiff and illegal -- fines. The chiefs claimed that the fines were "for Congress offences - for African National Congress crimes", although many of the villagers did not know what a "Congress offense" or the African National Congress was.127

Women who could not pay the fines fled to the hills, abandoning their homes and leaving their fields and animals untended.

Throughout 1957, the police mobile column moved from village to village, criss-crossing the Lefurutse reserve. In its wake were mass arrests, night raids, and brutal beatings of those who protested the issuance of reference books. In terror, the villagers left their houses at night and slept in the bush. The mobile column became a virtual army of occupation, camping in the villages, commandeering animals for food and women for domestic service.128

In November 1957, the mobile column began to extend its protection to pro-government chiefs -- against their own people. Contingents of "bodyguards" were organized, composed of government sympathizers and police. Village men were forcibly impressed into their ranks. Once they were associated with the "bodyguards", these men could not safely return to their villages. Their only hope of protection was to remain with the para-police units. Communities were thus divided internally, and violence spread. The "bodyguards" conducted nightly raids, searching for pass-burners, whipping and clubbing the villagers. Women were severely beaten, their bodies covered with huge bruises and deep gashes made from the sharpened edges of strips of tire. i2

Rather than intimidating the people, the police tactics intensified their anger and will to resist. Women were brought to the Zeerust jails by the hundreds, singing "Open wide the door of the prison, Commissioner. The women of Lefurutse are ready to come in".1 In response to harassment by police and government sympathizers, villagers engaged in acts of sabotage and counterattack. In
Leeuwwfontein, 14 to 15 huts were burned and the chief forced into hiding. Many of the homes belonged to members of the Zion Church who, together with the chief, had agreed to participate in the Government's removal scheme.131 In December, riots broke out in Witkleigat. For some time, the "bodyguards" had made a practice of meeting the buses coming into the village and screening the passengers as they descended. They habitually beat people who had paid fines rather than go to jail and those awaiting trial who were out on bail. The "bodyguards" also attacked men whose wives had not taken reference books, parents of those who had fled, and villagers who had helped the families of detainees.132 At Christmas time, when the Witkleigat men returned from the cities, they were attacked by the "bodyguards" as they stepped off the buses. For the first time, the passengers fought back. A crowd gathered and marched to the home of the pro-government chief. The chief had fled, leaving his house and car to be burned, his wife beaten, and his "bodyguards" killed. The mobile column from Pretoria arrived on the scene. Ninety people were arrested and charged with murder.

By the end of the month, the homes of 36 government collaborators had been burned. Rioting spread to other villages. Large-scale, indiscriminate arrests were made throughout the reserve. In early January, police shot and killed four Africans in Gopane.133 Massive exodus from the villages began. By January 1958, people were leaving by the thousands, abandoning huts, fields, and cattle. They went to the British Protectorate of Bechuanaland, to the Witwatersrand, even to Cape Town, 1,000 miles away. In a single week in February, 1,000 refugees fled to Bechuanaland, and more than 1,000 left for other parts of South Africa.134 Among the involuntary refugees were political "agitators", banished to remote parts of the Union where frequently they could not speak the local language. In March 1958, the Minister of Native Affairs announced that African National Congress membership, slogans, and salutes were henceforth illegal in certain African areas, including the Lefurutse reserve. Africans could not enter the reserve without written permission from the Native Affairs Department. Migrant workers returning from their places of employment were required to take out permits in order to enter their own "hareland".136 The penalty for breaking these regulations was a fine of up to R300 or three years imprisonment, plus three years imprisonment without the option of a fine. A person who raised his hand in a Congress salute could thus be sentenced to six years in prison.137

X. Conclusion

By 1960, an estimated 3,020,281 African women -- approximately 75 per cent of the adult female population - had accepted passes.138 Although it was not yet compulsory for women to take out reference books, they were subject to severe disabilities if they did not have them. Women without reference books could not rent houses in the urban areas, or they lost those that they had. They could not register the births of their children or be married according to common law. Without
a reference book, women could not receive old age pensions or maintenance
gants. They were not issued drivers' licences. Teachers and nurses without passes
were dismissed from their jobs. Some women claimed that their rent money was
not accepted, and the could not get licenses to sell beer until
they had produced a reference book." In 1958, many employers began to make
the possession of reference books a condition of employment, even though there
was no law requiring African women to register their service contracts or to carry
reference books.140

The last anti-pass demonstrations took place in March 1960. The Pan
Africanist Congress, which had split from the African National Congress in 1959,
called for a nationwide protest against the pass laws on 21 March. Although
response was negligible in Johannesburg where the support of the Pan Africanist
Congress was minimal, thousands of demonstrators gathered in the Sharpeville
location outside Vereeriging, 35 miles to the south. A crowd of up to 20,000
surrounded the police station. Under the slogan, "No bail, no defence, no fine",
the people had come without their passes and presented themselves
for arrest.142 The police, who could not accommodate so many prisoners, ordered
the crowd to disperse. Military aircraft dived low over the demonstrators in an
attempt to intimidate them. Having heard a rumor that a high-ranking government
official was coming to address them, the people refused to leave.
Without warning and without orders to fire, a line of soldiers shot into the crowd.
They continued to fire at the fleeing demonstrators for 10 to 30 seconds, killing 67 and wounding 186, including 40 women and eight children. One
hundred and fifty-five people were shot in the back.143

The same day, police fired on demonstrators in Vanderbijl Park, a few miles from
Sharpeville, and at the Langa location near Cape Town. Two Africans were shot
death in Vanderbijl Park and two in Langa, where rioting continued for several
hours.145 At Langa, the police had fired sporadically for 10 to 15 minutes with a
machine gun mounted on a saracen.146 For the next several weeks, violence
erupted in the townships near Cape Town and on the Witwatersrand. Meetings
were banned in most of the urban areas. Raids and arrests decimated the
antigovernment organizations. 147

March 28 was declared a day of mourning by the African National Congress.
In honor of the Sharpeville and Langa victims, the African National Congress
called for a nationwide stay-at-home. The strike was more than 90 per cent
effective among Africans in Cape Town, Johannesburg, and Port Elizabeth.148
Across the country, hundreds of thousands of Africans responded to the call of the
African National Congress. On the same day, a bill was introduced in parliament
that would ban the African National Congress and the Pan Africanist Congress,
and drastically increase penalties for politically motivated acts of defiance.149
On 30 March, the Government declared a state of emergency and assumed broad
powers to arrest and detain indefinitely persons suspected of subversive activities.
The police began a massive nationwide sweep, arresting leaders and supporters of
the anti-government campaigns. Ultimately, more than 2,000 political activists
were arrested, including the Treason Trial defendants, all of whom had been out on bail. Demonstrations were held in towns and cities throughout the Union, protesting the detention of the leaders. On 8 April, the African National Congress and the Pan Africanist Congress banned under the terms of the newly-passed Unlawful Organizations Act. Already weakened by the arrests of their leaders, the remnants of the African National Congress and of the Pan Africanist Congress went underground. As outlawed organizations, they could no longer convene mass meetings and demonstrations. The days of anti-pass protests were over. On 26 October 1962, the Government announced that all African women, aged 16 and over, would be required to carry reference books as of 1 February 1963. By that time, the African National Congress Women's League had been outlawed, and the Federation of South African Women had effectively ceased to exist. Much of their leadership had been banned, banished, or imprisoned. The women's anti-pass campaign had lasted for more than a decade. Protests and demonstrations had shaken towns, cities, and villages across the country. Tens of thousands of women had participated in the resistance, forcing the Government to delay for 11 years the mandatory extension of reference books to African women. The women had fought the pass legislation with unprecedented militancy. They had resisted the implementation of laws which threatened the very core of their existence -- their position in society, their ability to provide for their children, and their capacity to create for their husbands and children a stable and secure family life. The women had clung to their last remaining freedom - the freedom of movement - with a tenacity unparalleled in other struggles. Unlike African men, who had lost this freedom generations before, the women still hoped to avoid the inevitable. Although they were defeated in their immediate objectives, the repeal of pass laws affecting women, the women had won a major victory. They had gained their rightful place in the struggle for national liberation, a place at the forefront, on footing equal to that of men. They had shown that men could not hope to liberate themselves if women were relegated to a subordinate status. For without the women, the men did not know the day and the hour.

Notes
1. The earliest alliance was formed between the African National Congress (ANC) and the South African Indian Chagress (SAIC), which together organized the Defiance Campaign against Unjust Laws in 1952. In 1953, the South African Coloured People's Organization (SACPO) and the Congress of Democrats (COD) were founded. The latter was composed primarily of white supporters of the Congress movement. The nonracial South African Congress of Trade Unions (SACIJ) was founded in March 1955. On 25 and 26 June 1955, these organizations came together in Klipton for the historic Congress of the People. It
was at this Congress that 2,884 delegates of all racial groups from all parts of South Africa wrote the "Freedom Charter".

2. In December 1956, Lilian Ngoyi, national president of both the Federation of South African Women and the African National Congress Women's League, became the first woman ever to be elected to the National Executive Committee of the African National Congress.


6. Although the intention of the 1913 Natives Land Act was to bring uniformity to African land policy, one of its provisions barred Africans from acquiring any unscheduled land in the Orange Free State. Elsewhere in the Union, Africans were permitted to acquire unscheduled land from Africans, but not from non-Africans. Another provision effectively rendered the Act inoperative in the Cape Province. Thus, it was not until the Native Trust and Land Act was passed in 1936 that the African land policies of the Cape Province and the Orange Free State were brought into line with that of Natal and the Transvaal. Union of South Africa, Social and Economic Planning Council, the Native Reserves... op. cit., p. 6.


9. Ibid., Chapter 3, p. 141.

10. Ibid., p. 130.
17. Ibid.
19. Ibid., p. 51.
26. The Tomlinson Commission’s recommendation that secondary and tertiary sectors of the economy be developed within the African homelands was rejected by the Nationalist Party Government. As a result, landless Africans were forced to enter the migratory labour market or engage in informal sector activities.

29. Ibid., p. 297.
30. Ibid., p. 300.
31. Ibid., p. 306; Mbeki, op. cit., p. 98.
Cites 1936 Union census: 54 per cent of the adult male African population is absent from the reserves at any given time.
34. Ibid., p. 261.
43. Certain categories of African men were exempt from these provisions: chiefs, headmen, registered parliamentary voters in the Cape Province, land owners, clergymen, certain teachers, and court interpreters. 44. Mariotti, op. cit., pp. 82, 90. 45. Ibid., p. 90.
46. Ibid., p. 82.
47. Wilson and Thompson, on. cit., Chapter 4, p. 197. 48. Ibid., p. 199.
50. Horrell, Laws... op. cit., p. 177; Karis and Carter, op. cit., p. 49.

55. Horrell, Laws... op. cit., p. 175.
56. Ibid., pp. 187-188.
57. Ibid., p. 185
60. Mariotti, op. cit., p. 282.
64. Women's Charter, op. cit.
69. Wilson and Thompson, oo. cit., Chapter 4, p. 200.

72. Benson, op. cit., p. 182.
73. Luckhardt and Wall, op. cit., p. 305.
76. Luckhardt and Wall, op. cit., p. 306.
79. Luckhardt and Wall, op. cit., p. 305. (Revised translation).
81. Ibid.
82. "Wrcen Burn Passes", Advance, 4 March 1954.

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86. Benson, op. cit., p. 183
In 1956, E.P. Moretsele, president of the Transvaal branch of the African National Congress, qualified his praise of the successful women's march on Pretoria. Once again, the weakness of the organization in the rural areas was the issue at hand: "In spite of the remarkable and far-reaching success of the campaign so far, serious organisational weaknesses still exist and a lot of work requires to be done. In a population of 12.5 million, 20,000 is still a small number. More women must be drawn into the movement so that the issue might be fought in an organized and disciplined fashion. Opposition is not as yet strong and powerful enough to compel the Government to withdraw its decision and the movement has not penetrated deeply into the country's rural villages".

Finally, decades after the cessation of the rural revolts, African National Congress executive, Moses Mabhida, reflected upon their significance and the failure of the African National Congress to build upon them:

"When the women demonstrated, I think it was one of the most powerful demonstrations. Unfortunately for our people, we didn't realize the extent of the organization of the people, which was at that time very high, and the women formed a very strong nucleus for a powerful organization. If I may say, if our people had taken it further, it might have taken the same trend as it did in Iran - maybe not exactly the same, but the extent of organization and the militancy of the people was almost the same".

Luckhardt and Wall, OD. cit., p. 306.


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