CAP on Gender

POLICIES and programmes show CAP's commitment to non-sexism.

CAP's working principles speak of fighting gender discrimination. CAP has a reasonable maternity policy. Women make up fifty percent of CAP staff and three out of five co-ordinators are women.

Women are proactively recruited onto CAP courses with organisations requested to mandate at least one woman.

But is CAP anti-sexist enough? How far have gender issues penetrated the consciousness of staff and students at CAP? Do we ensure that women's voices are heard? To what extent are we committed to preparing women for leadership roles?

There are just some of the questions that are beginning to be raised in CAP. And a group committed to addressing gender issues has now been formed.

Patti Henderson expresses concern of teachers at CAP. 'We haven't really integrated gender in the deep sense in our teaching methodologies. We have this idea that the way we teach is neutral, but it isn't. A lot of women students on our courses are very reluctant to speak out or to give their opinions directly. We have to find ways of facilitating this process.'

Foremost among these were: 'Who will be represented at an assembly?' and 'What are the views of different political organisations, given their different definitions of a Constituent Assembly?'

Participants asked how an assembly would affect cultural workers and expressed the need for cultural workers to be represented.

There was also some discussion on the way cultural workers saw the assembly and what images they might use to express their understanding of one. Speaker, Marcie Solomon of LACOM, said that the questions raised were precisely the ones which needed to be addressed by those proposing an assembly. She felt the nature of a Constituent Assembly will be determined in the struggles, debates and discussions leading up to it and that it was important that all constituencies participate in giving shape to an assembly.

At the end people stressed the need for ongoing debates on the topic and requested longer notification and that information be distributed beforehand so that people could prepare for debate.

Constituent Assembly

A WORKSHOP on the Constituent Assembly provided a handy analogy for participants when it was delayed by a debate on the language in which proceedings were to be conducted. The workshop resolved to have Khoza and Afrikaans interpreters and it was pointed out that the issue of language would need to be addressed as a precondition for a Constituent Assembly.

The workshop was held for CAP staff and students on 15 February at CAP, Chapel Street. In small groups, participants shared ideas on a Constituent Assembly. The groups raised many questions.
Women and Media

THE WAY we see ourselves and the way others see us is shaped every day by the way we are represented in the media - whether television, film, magazines, advertisements or the press. These images often determine how we interpret our own reality and expectations. These images tell the men around us what to expect of us. And it is these images which teach our children who we are and teach them who they are as girls and boys, and will be as women and men.

We are all familiar with the pictures of the ideal woman projected by the commercial world - the all-desirable fashion queen, the contented housewife and mother and so on. But do we ever question what contribution these pictures make to the high incidence of rape and to the 'accepted' practice of beating women who don't conform to expectation? How do these images affect our self-confidence and the way we see ourselves in the world?

And if these images affect women in general, how much more do they affect black, working-class women?

But the 'alternative' press needs to be looked at as well. Does this press do more than pay lip-service to the struggle of women for recognition? Are women not often represented as followers rather than leaders?

The CAP Media Project is wanting to take these issues up, both theoretically and practically. The project aims to start this with a short course which will explore the negative image of women - in particular of black, working-class women - and through practical work on drawings, collage and other activities will seek to construct some positive images of women and our place in the world. We will then explore ways of reproducing these as exciting media for wider communication.

The project hopes that this course will be educational, informative and creative and that it will open previously closed doors of media communication to women in new and stimulating ways.

The course will begin in early April. Anyone wishing to contribute and/or participate (particularly those involved in women's organisations) should contact Gaby or Trish at 47 8845 as soon as possible.

Women at Work

FROM DOMESTIC work to the darkroom, Mavis Matandeki and Primrose Talakumeni show what can be done when women have access to media skills.

Their photographic exhibition of women, opened by CAP's Media Project in Community House at the end of 1990, has travelled to various events and meetings. Most recently it was shown at the Durban Conference on Women. Work from their exhibition has also been published in Full Frame, a photographic journal.

Directed by United Women's Congress onto the full time media course in 1989/90, Primrose and Mavis had their training extended by three months during which they did a photographic documentary.

'We decided that to use our newly learnt skills to put together an exhibition on women because we had not seen a women's exhibition before,' they say.

'We wanted to show what life was like for women in the western Cape. At the time UWCO was dissolving to become part of the ANC Women's League and we felt we should try to capture some of the history of UWCO before it was gone.'
PERFORMING ARTS COUNCILS, facing subsidy cuts on the one hand and needing to engage community cultural organisations on the other, came into the spotlight again last week when CAP hosted its first monthly debate for the year on Wednesday 27 February.

CAPAB director, George Loopuyt, South reporter Musa Nqulwane, and Mike van Graan, CAP director and chairperson of TAG (Theatre Action Group) debated the topic "The performing arts councils: do they have a future?" Temple Rapstleisch, researcher and lecturer at Stellenbosch University chaired the panel.

Mike van Graan's paper calling for the dissolution of performing arts councils presented a clear vision for cultural priorities and the redistribution of funds and resources. Speaking in his personal capacity, Van Graan argued that, "Changing CAPAB cannot happen in isolation; it will have to affect the whole milieu: training, criticism, the location of theatres, values and standards, functions of theatre, etc. It is a huge task with so much vested interest to struggle against that I think it has to disband the performing arts councils [and] in their place to create a structure which could facilitate their work in the future." He also argued for a more decentralized arts council system where the arts council of the Western Cape would be replaced by an umbrella body SACTAC that would formulate the arts council, and not the various municipalities, which have created a system that is not conducive to the arts.

Speaking against the popular argument for maintaining the performing arts councils, Van Graan stated that the recent "absence of creative energy and support" was not only due to the lack of funds, but also to the lack of interest in the arts among the general public. He concluded that the arts council should be disbanded and replaced by a new, more efficient system.

TAG
FORMED AFTER a seminar on theatre hosted by CAP, TAG (Theatre Action Group) has united a group of individuals from a wide range of theatre institutions and organisations to develop a programme of action that will build theatre in the western Cape.

TAG aims to develop all forms of theatre, build a network of theatre venues, promote theatre-related theory, encourage experimentation and explore aesthetic forms.

The programme from now till June includes: direct theatre in March; an experimental event, a Children's Theatre Circuit during the Easter holidays, and the start of an Adult Theatre Circuit, all in April. In May there will be a weekend conference on "theatre for healing" and a creative space will be created at Dal Josaphat in Pearl. In June the Children's Circuit will be repeated and Drama in Education workshops will be run with SADTU (South African Democratic Teachers Union).

TAG has also been debating engaging CAPAB and at a forum on 10 February, TAG decided that as a minimum requirement for any relationship with CAPAB, CAPAB needs to issue a public statement acknowledging its racist history and the exclusion of the majority of the people from its activities and commit itself to constitutional, structural and policy changes in accordance with a changed direction to serve all of the people of the Cape and their performing arts needs and aspirations. CAPAB would then need to indicate practical steps for changing and a time frame in which they would implement those changes. A committee was elected to draft a statement which will be the basis of negotiations with them.
Drama In Education

AVRIL EMBOT-CRAIG will present a course in drama-in-education. The course is aimed at teachers in primary and secondary schools and any person involved in educational workshops or at training centres and will be of interest to all who are interested in using drama methods in the classroom to estivate and stimulate the learning process. Teachers do not have to know how to act.

A detailed introduction to the methods of drama-in-education will be given and teachers will be assisted in preparing sessions, specifically for classroom work in their subject.

Dates: Tuesdays from 9 April to 28 May 1991
Time: 5.10 - 7.30 pm
Venue: Seminar Room, CAP, Chapel Street
Fee: R10
5 bursaries of R40 each are available.
Please contact Lucy Alexander at 45 3989.
Avril Ebbot-Craig is an experienced Drama-in-Education teacher and has been involved in training teachers for the past five years.

Part-time Theatre

THE PART-TIME THEATRE courses started last month and are going well.
The Street Theatre Course has a full complement of 13 adults from a variety of areas including Mitchells Plain, Athlone, Sea Point, Crawford and Wellington.
The School Drama Course has 10 students from Fazekal High and Langa High.

In both courses participants have been learning basic theatre skills which include concentration, focus, listening skills, confidence in communication and use of the body.
The Street Theatre participants have now begun to work on improvisation skills and techniques.
"Our final lesson in February was a most stimulating as the adults began to feel safe and confident with each other and started to explore their new skills" says John Walter who facilitates this class.
The school students work well together and are beginning to work on short drama pieces and a basic dance routine.

African Literature and Resistance

RAJANI NAIDOO will teach a course on African fiction which portrays the struggles of those who are oppressed and exploited.
The course is aimed at anyone with an interest in African Literature and the debates around culture in South Africa and will try to cover the particular needs of cultural workers, teachers and students. Special mention will be made of Albie Sachs' paper.
Participants will have access to a course reader, videos and audio cassettes.

Dates: Thursdays from 11 April - 9 May 1991
Time: 5.10 - 7.30 pm
Venue: Seminar Room, CAP, Chapel Street
Fee: R15 Reduced Fee: R5
If you cannot afford the full fee you may apply to pay the reduced fee or for a bursary.
Rajani Naidoo teaches English at Khanya College.

Children's Arts

DANCE and movement classes have begun in the Children's Arts Project on Wednesday afternoons.
The classes, run by dancer and teacher Joy Isintho, are experimental and aim to give children the space to express themselves creatively by involving them in a number of arts disciplines.
The classes will therefore on occasion include elements of drama, art and music.
Children come to CAP's Chapel Street venue from as far afield as Hout Bay, Mitchell's Plain, Khayelitsha and also from the immediate vicinity.

CAP SRC

A STUDENTS REPRESENTATIVE Council was launched at CAP at the end of last year.
The SRC would like to invite all CAP students, full and part-time, to join the SRC and attend meetings to ensure the following:
• sharing of students' problems
• representation of all students, including part-time students
• raising the voice of students at CAP
Those interested in joining the SRC should speak to Beth Mayekiso, chairperson, or Olif Hector, secretary.

Children's Arts Project has begun to establish links with the Marion Institute in Chapel Street with the aim of reaching more children in CAP's immediate community.
A new social worker has been appointed at the Marion Institute and she is in the process of canvassing families in the area to find out the needs of children.
Zwelithi and John Walter visited the institute on Thursday 28 February to encourage local children to participate in CAP classes and events. Zwelethi showed them slides of CAP children and their work and John followed this with a session introducing them to drama.

Community Arts Project

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