

buildings that would not be used in the near future and could easily house all of them. Fortunately the voice of the people was followed.

What opened my eyes more to the problem of domestic violence and child abuse in South Africa was my visit to Illitha Labantu, a great but unfortunately, very much needed organization. Accommodated in the middle of Khayelitsha, their sun sign in the colourful, flowery garden made me feel very welcome. One thing is for sure, all of you know a lot more about the reason why organizations like Illitha Labantu are there than I do as a Dutch woman. Of course women do struggle and do fight for their rights in Europe as well. Of course domestic violence and child abuse is not unknown but I do not think you can compare it to the South African situation.

There are different organizations where you can go for help in Holland but I think the big difference between South Africa and Holland is that Dutch women know where they can find the help they need and those organizations are within easy reach.

In Holland women are very aware of their rights and although it seems an everlasting struggle to win these rights they have achieved a lot already. Still, far too few women occupy high positions, but this is changing. There are many child care services for working mothers. You have the possibility of part-time jobs and job sharing. And what you see happen in Holland in recent years is 'the changing of male and female roles', resulting in the woman working full-time and the man being a full-time 'house husband'. The opinions are very divided on this issue. It is not fully accepted, but is happening and I think that is where acceptance starts.

During the visit Zoleka, a thirty year old activist for the rights of women told about her struggle to fight for the rights of African lesbians, that homosexuality is not accepted. What surprised me most is that there simply isn't a word for homosexual in many African languages! The country where I come from is probably one of the most liberated countries in the world concerning homosexuality. A gay couple walking down the street doesn't have to hide their relationship, they can even get married. Although it is getting more accepted resistance does exist as well. Somehow it is often a small group of conservative people whose voice is the loudest for a long time.

Anyway, this European view does not bring a solution of course, but I hope that puts new heart into you. It takes a lot of courage and perseverance to fight for women's rights in general, but South African women are definitely on the road to success.

Article by: Xandra Leuverink

MEMBERSHIP FEES

To help cover the cost of the production of the newsletters and keep the project running we are asking members who can, to pay annual membership fees. These may be paid monthly.

R240.00 per annum per organisation in South Africa
R120.00 per individual in South Africa
US \$50.00 for members in other parts of Africa
US \$90.00 for members in Europe/USA etc

PLEASE FEEL FREE TO CONTRIBUTE ARTICLES, LETTERS, CARTOONS AND IDEAS TO OUR NEWSLETTER, OR COME INTO THE OFFICE AND BE INTERVIEWED ON YOUR VIEWS ON THE MEDIA.

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MEDIA WATCH

NEWSLETTER

TABLE OF CONTENTS

- MAKING PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES VISIBLE
- GENDER AND COMMUNICATIONS COURSE '99
 - MEDIA TREATMENT OF ELDERS
- BOOKLET FOR EDITORS AND JOURNALISTS
 - CT THROUGH A VISITOR'S EYES

MAKING VISIBLE: PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES IN THE MEDIA



Photo : courtesy of Cosmopolitan Magazine

Shelley Barry has joined E-TV, where part of her work entails creating more visibility for marginalised groups on the television station.

People with disabilities don't have sex. And you won't see them modelling the latest spring range from fashion houses. God forbid. In fact they don't have careers and never buy washing powder. Damaged goods, you see, never fall in love, laugh, have children, dreams or aspirations of any kind - except maybe to be cured. The poor cripples. Let's raise some funds for them, give them a disability grant to shut them up. They don't belong. Keep them in their special schools, or hidden in back-rooms. Hospitals and sheltered workshops are fine too. Just keep them out of sight as much as we can. And let's pretend they don't exist.

NO. 1 1999

GENDER AND COMMUNICATIONS

MEDIA WORKS
COMMUNITY MEDIA

If the media were personified, I often imagine that these are the words it would utter. The media, like a mirror, reflects our lives and the world in which we live and to a great extent shapes our perceptions of ourselves and others. The media validates the existence of something by making it visible. We gain a sense of the context of our lives through being able to voyeuristically view the lives of others.

Similarly the media invalidates existence, creating "invisible lives". People with disabilities are a prime example of this. Our lives are not reflected, except within a medical context or within cruel cultural beliefs that we should be the subject of ridicule, while we're no doubt paying off debts on our bad karma. When we hold the mirror of the media up to our faces, we see only something to be pitied, a lesser being, an aberration of humanity. People with disabilities are viewed as being ill, helpless and in need of being "looked after". This sentiment fits into the medical model of disability, where disability is viewed within the context of illness, health and welfare. This view, unfortunately dominant in the world in which we live, is based on the pompous notion that the "other" has no value. **We only need to examine racism and sexism to realise that somewhere along the line, someone assumed the position of superiority and the media justified it.**

Integrating people with disabilities into the mainstream of society is the vision of all those who fought against the oppression and exclusion which continues to face them daily. The media has a big role to play in achieving this vision. Fortunately, the Integrated National Disability Strategy, launched by Deputy President, Thabo Mbeki in December 1997 provides guidelines for disability specific policies and programmes within integrated contexts. The guidelines suggest the following methods to create a media which is inclusive and representative of all people.

Media Awareness: People working within the media should undergo disability awareness sensitivity training, so that they are able to reflect this in their work. Derogatory language, such as reference to people with disabilities as 'freaks' or 'cripples' is still in use and allowed in most media vehicles.

Media Visibility: All types of media images should reflect and acknowledge the lives of people with disabilities.

Self Representation: Disabled People's Organisations (D.P.O's) should be widely consulted on the content of programmes which reflect their lives. For too long there has been a situation whereby people with disabilities are spoken on "behalf of". It is time to tell our stories and realise our visions.

Access: The media should be accessible for people with disabilities. This does not refer to physical access into buildings but it also refers to access to communication. Access should be seen in the context of the wider economic and social exclusion of people with disabilities. Thus sign language, interpreters, lip speakers, note takers and communication facilitators need to be included in order to make the media accessible.

The media is pivotal to creating tolerance and appreciation of diversity. Yet when we hold the media up as a mirror, we don't have enough of a voice as black people, as women, as people with disabilities, as gays and lesbians, as children. Are our lives and thoughts not a powerful contribution in building a meaningful democracy? Are our issues and our struggles not newsworthy? The more we expose ourselves to each other, the more understanding and respect can be fostered. The media can only begin transforming when all those within the industry can throw their nets wider, exploring issues which goes beyond violence and destruction. We are in the process of reclaiming our notion of self and identity as we rebuild our country and our world. As we are reconstructing our history, we should be acutely aware that this is a process of making visible which has been denied the validation of existence by the media.

Why don't we challenge the narrow lens we insist on seeing through?

We are here. See us.

Shelley Barry
January 1999

Editor's note:

The United Nations Standard Rules on the Equalisation of Opportunities for People with Disabilities lists the role of the media as the first of the 22 rules which is used as a guideline for disability rights movement all over the world.

ABOUT THIS ISSUE

In this first edition of our newsletter for 1999 we look at a range of issues. We focus on transformation of the media with regards to marginalised groups. Shelley Barry, a disability rights activist currently working for e-tv shares her views on the current state of the media and the visibility of people with disabilities in particular. We wish her well in her efforts to ensure a representative media and will be looking in on her achievements later in the year.

We also focus on this year's Gender and Communication Course which begins in April and we hope you will share this information with your organisation.

A booklet for editors and journalist on reporting violence against women is being written and is described briefly. The booklet will be out later this year and we will keep you updated on its progress.

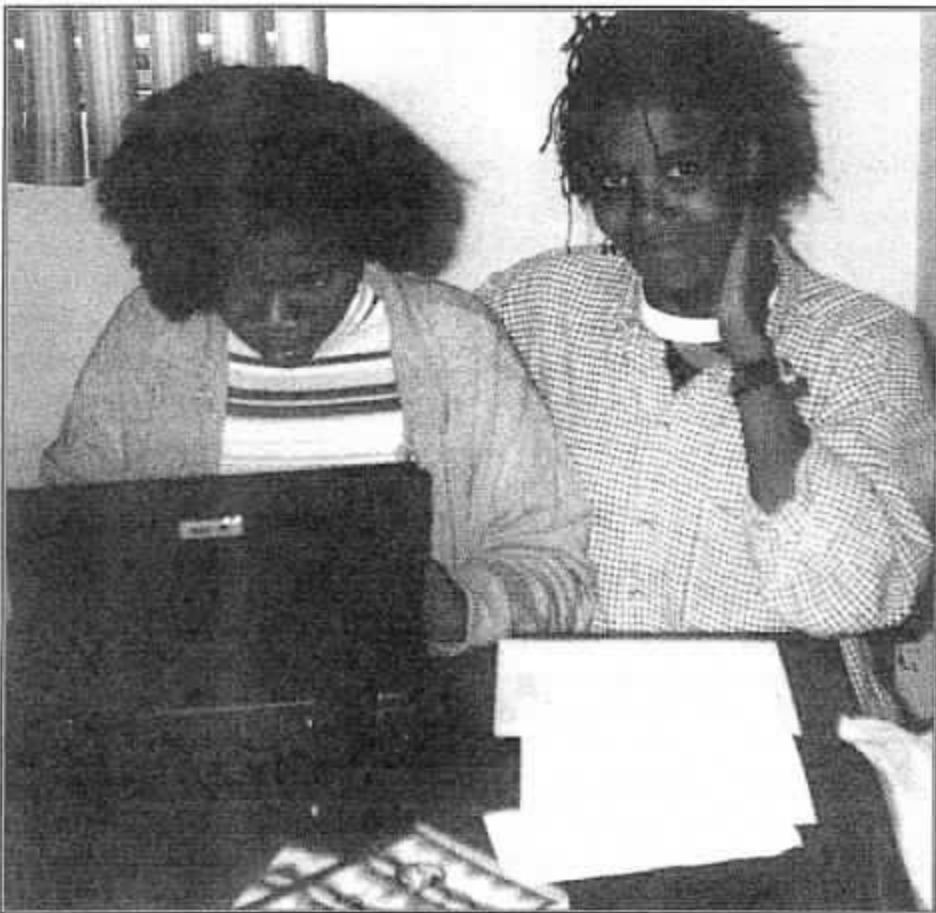
An illustration of how elderly women are treated in the media is given in the coverage of an abused grandmother who was locked up in a water tank for eight months by her grandson. Finally we take a trip with Xandra Leuverink, a Dutch student who is at Mediaworks for three months, and shares her experiences in our country. To all those who contributed to this first edition we say a big thank you.

GENDER AND COMMUNICATIONS COURSE 1999 - GET WITH THE PROGRAMME!

Ever wanted to know how to create a newsletter or radio programme? Here's how YOU can make a difference in your organisation!

This year we will be hosting another exciting beginning for the Gender and Communications course which will begin in April. The course targets diverse women's organisations, especially women who are least heard and have little or no access to media. Previously, the course has seen women from crisis organisations, community peace initiatives, sex workers, women with disabilities, radio trainers and aspiring video makers who have taken their media skills back into the community and their

organisations. We are looking forward to the new participants with eager anticipation.



Participants of the Gender and Communication Course creating their newsletter articles. Photo by Bukelwa Voko.

The aim of course is to :

- provide basic gender and media literacy,
- develop critical thinking and analysis of all forms of media
- develop communication skills
- provide tools for effective media interventions
- explore women's rights
- provide practical experience in media production (print, visual and radio)

Some highlights of previous courses included visiting the first meeting between the Gender Commission and civil society, attending workshops by popular media workers and field trips to Parliament. This year we hope to include more practical experience in media production where participants will have the chance to produce various media, for example a newsletter, a radio or video programme.



Serious concentration as participants explore the tools of radio programming. Photo by Bukelwa Voko.

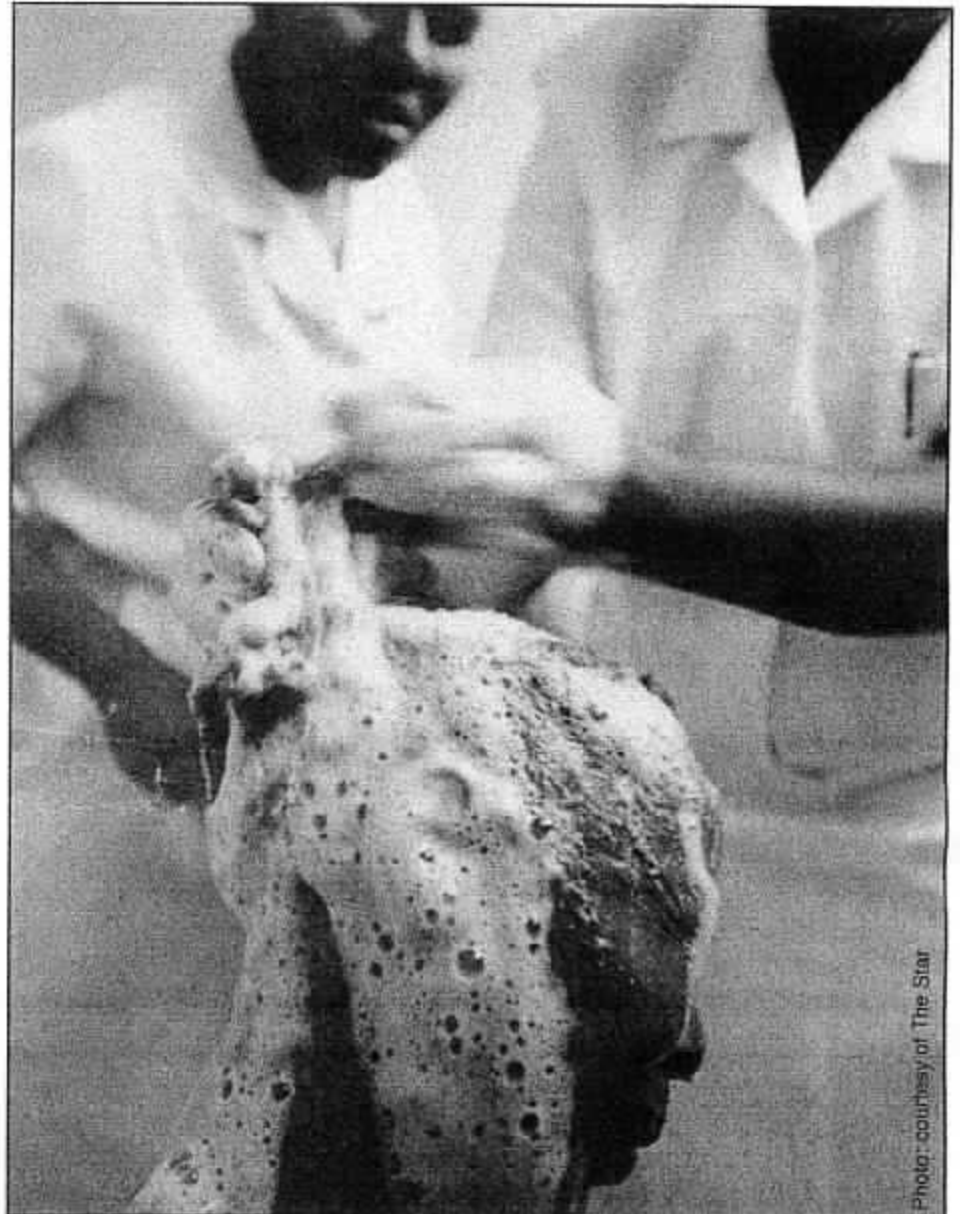
At present the media does not cover women's issues adequately nor does it reflect a positive image of women. Women are more often than not portrayed as victims, sluts, gossips or merely the wife of so and so. In order to fight these negative stereotypes and ensure that women's voices are heard women need to be skilled

and informed to use these tools in challenging the media. The course aims to do this and enable women to challenge and monitor the representation of women in the media.

The course starts in April and will run for approximately 20 weeks. Early registration for the course has already begun, although you have until Wednesday 17 March 1999 to register and be a part of this unique programme! For further information or comments contact Anthea at Mediaworks, tel: 4610368

Hot bath for water-tank grandmother

CAPE ARGUS, WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 13, 1999.



Washing away the blues: Queen Ndlovu enjoys her first bath in eight months at an old age-home in Krugersdorp.

ARGUS CORRESPONDENT
Johannesburg - Queen Ann Ndlovu, 66, the Muldersdrift pensioner locked in a windmill water tank for eight months by her grandson, has been moved to an old-age home by Department of Welfare officials.

The social worker handling the case, Kelley Manzini, found accommodation for her at the Mōreglans Old-Age Home in Krugersdorp, where she was immediately placed in a sick room yesterday.

She suffered badly over the weekend when thunderstorms ravaged the Muldersdrift area.

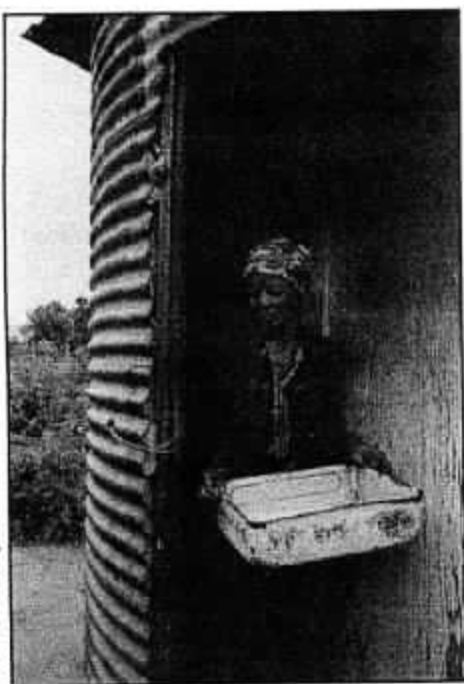
In her leaking water tank home, Mrs Ndlovu was forced to sleep under a wet blanket.

But yesterday, on arrival at her new home, she was given five

new dresses, petticoats, underwear, toiletries, shoes and nightwear. Nurses bathed her and washed and combed her hair. Mrs Ndlovu's grandson, Michael Mabela, who said he locked her in a tank at night to stop her wandering around, drove with her to the home and promised to visit regularly.

The pension book he has been drawing money from for the past eight months was handed to the department, which will be used to pay for her board.

John Banda, a community leader in the area, who reported her situation last Friday, said he was glad the department had helped her. "I am pleased she will now be looked after and be allowed to regain her dignity," he said.



Flashback: Mrs Ndlovu in the water tank, her prison for eight months.

WOMEN'S MEDIA WATCH LETTER RESPONDING TO THE PREVIOUS ARTICLE

REPORT ON GRAN IN TANK
MISSED THE KEY ISSUES
(Cape Argus, Thursday, January
28, 1999)

1999 was declared the Year of Older Persons. Elder abuse in South Africa is an enormous problem and the media could play an important role in the raising public awareness about it.

The story you ran on January 12 on page 5, with the headline "Hot bath for water tank grandmother", followed up the story of Queen Ndlovu, who had been locked up for eight months in a

steel drum by her grandson while he drew her pension. She has subsequently been transferred to an old-age home where she will be looked after and where, as the home's owner suggested in the article, her dignity will be restored.

Your report did not seem to find it strange that the grandson was the one driving her to the old age home and saying he would visit her like a normal relative.

The picture, showing Mrs Ndlovu's head covered in shampoo and her eyes tightly shut, was not one that anyone would like to see of themselves or their grandmother in a newspaper.

Certainly it did nothing to restore her dignity and was regarded as outrageously disrespectful by a lot of people.

It was a graphic illustration of class and race prejudice. It is hard to imagine you would have pictured a traumatised elderly woman who was white, well-known, or the grandmother of some prominent person in this manner.

In the absence of elderly black women portrayed playing important roles in your paper, this sort of picture plays into racist notions about black people needing a bath.

We would advocate that when you run stories of abuse of whatever kind, you also print the contact numbers of appropriate organisations or groups that can assist readers with similar problems in getting help. This is one strategy that would make your paper more user-friendly to survivors of all sorts of violence that are covered regularly. An organisation called HEAL (Halt Elder Abuse Line) exists in the Western Cape to provide information and counselling and referral to elders who have been abused. They can be contacted at 461 1001.

Gabrielle Le Roux
Women's Media Watch Co-ordinator
Cape Town

BOOKLET FOR EDITORS AND JOURNALISTS ON REPORTING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Women's Media Watch is contributing to a booklet for editors and journalists on reporting violence against women. The booklet is a collaboration between Soul City, the National Network on Violence against Women, the Institute for the Advancement of Journalism and the Women's Media Watch.

The function of the booklet is to explain the concept of violence against women to journalists, to explore what the impact of the current media coverage is. It will contain ideas and suggestions on how report the issue

differently and a resource list of statistics and who to speak to for information on various aspects of violence against women and related issues.

The booklet is being distributed free to working journalists and editors but there will be a limited number available for other people in organisations who would be able to use it in their work with the media. If you feel that you would be able to use it as a tool to address problems you have with the way that the media reports on the issue, please fax a request for a copy to: **Women's Media Watch 021 4610385.**



From left to right: Bukelwa, Anthea, Zoleka, Felix, Zimasa, and Avega Bishop (IWDA) share a moment at the end of their visit to organisations. Photo by Xandra Leuverink one of our Dutch exchange students wrote this article.

CAPE TOWN THROUGH A VISITOR'S EYES

I was born and raised far from here where the sun is less strong, the sky is less bright and the air is less dry. Where the colours of the land, the trees, the flowers and the sand are different. And where the smell, the people, the food and the music are definitely of another kind. The comparisons are too many and exactly the reasons why it is so interesting being here in South Africa.

Coming from The Netherlands to South Africa for the first time in my life I have seen the city of Cape Town and some of its surrounding areas. I have been to Khayelitsha, Worcester, Grabouw, Wellington, Simonstown, Kirstenbosch, Stellenbosch and Cape Point. Driving around seeing those diverse places and talking to both white and black South Africans, I realised very quickly that South Africa is really a country of contradictions. Of course I knew this already before I came here, but being here and experiencing it is something different. Working at Mediaworks has given me the opportunity to get a better understanding of this country. During a warm, sunny morning in the middle of the summer, it was my second day at Mediaworks, I went to Khayelitsha.

We drove through Khayelitsha on my first visit to a township. As I have only seen this on Dutch television so far, I stared my eyes out. Not that I am the only one who stares her eyes out: some little children grab my fingers and look at me as if I am some creature from another planet! Seeing townships on the news or even in a documentary doesn't make you realize how it is to be there. I was really impressed and sometimes also shocked at the state of housing in some of the areas.

It reminded me of an enormous row that recently took place in my country. The government intended to house refugees who asked for asylum, in tents in the middle of the winter, with temperatures below zero degrees. The whole country protested not only because it would have been inhumane but most of all because it was not a necessary option at all. There were several empty governmental