

SOUTH AFRICAN WOMEN

Pearl A. Marsh is a Black woman, presently a doctoral student at UC Berkeley, who has formed an organization, South African Women's Fund, to assist the women of that country in their continuing struggle against political and economic repression by the white government in South Africa. After traveling extensively in that country and assessing the plight of the women there, Ms. Marsh returned to this country determined to establish some kind of helping mechanism between the Black women in the U.S. and those in South Africa. The South African Women's Fund is the result. She is now contacting Black women's organizations thruout the Bay Area soliciting support -money, time, providing forums for and open dialogue, or whatever. Below is an open letter to the women of BWOA from Ms. Marsh. We are printing the letter to reach the largest number of BWOA members with what we believe to be an important issue, consistent with the spirit of networking that we have urged in earlier issues of "What It Is." We have interviewed Ms. Marsh and attended a forum where she made an extremely interesting presentation including a film on the women in South Africa. She is an extremely articulate and committed Black woman whose efforts get high ratings from organizations such as the Third World fund and others. As BWOA members bring their ideas and energy to the planning session for next year, we hope that holding forums on issues such as the plight of our African sisters can be part of the BWOA contribution to educating the Black community.

Sisters:

The SOUTH AFRICAN WOMEN'S FUND is a women's organization formed in January, 1980 to provide political education in the United States about Black women's oppression in South Africa. In addition, we seek to provide financial assistance to Black women in South Africa working in trade unions, women's cooperatives, and political organizations. In their words;

"We women of South Africa, wives and mothers, working women and housewives, Africans, Indians, Whites, and Coloured, hereby declare our aim of striving for the removal of all laws, regulations, conventions, and customs, that discriminate against us as women and that deprive us in any way of our inherent right to the advantages, responsibilities, and opportunities that society offers to any one section of the population."

Black women organizing in South Africa have chosen self-help industries as one means of reaching unemployed and isolated women. Only twenty-four percent of Black women are formally employed. Unemployment makes women particularly vulnerable to the urban removal policies of the government. Self-help industries strive to keep women in the cities by guaranteeing them employment. Women are drawn together, collectively, and trained to design, make, and market clothes in their communities at prices far below those in regular stores. While these projects help women remain in the cities it also provides clothing to families who can barely afford to feed themselves. The larger outcome, however, is the development of a strong base of women to act with others to achieve the above goal.

We would like to present our program on Women's Resistance to Apartheid to Black Women Organized for Action. The program centers on the Defiance Campaign of the 1950's and, more recently, the labor and community struggles in Capetown with the Food and Canning Workers Union and Crossroads, a squatters community. In addition, we would like to ask for donations from individuals and/or the organization to add to the "women's war chest again'st apartheid." We appreciate any support you are able to give.

Please contact us at; SOUTH AFRICAN WOMEN'S FUND, c/o Africa Resource Center, P.O. Bxo 415, Oakland, CA 95604.