

THE POLITICS OF GENDER: NEGOTIATING LIBERATION

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Introduction

The Malibongwe Conference¹ was organised by the African National Congress of South Africa (ANC). This conference brought together women from within South Africa and in exile from South Africa as well as women from other countries. It was held in Amsterdam from the 13-18th January 1990. It was a watershed for South African women and the ANC. The position and status of women within South Africa were legitimated as political issues to be addressed within the process of national liberation.

The Malibongwe Conference Papers provide a written, often collectively written, account of the social, economic and political position of women in South Africa. The majority of papers are written by women of the mass democratic movement and exile women members of the ANC. There are a number of papers written by men, notably members of the ANC in exile. 'Woman as mother' is a dominant theme (see Butler, Gaitskell and Unterhalter, Hofmeyr, Walker and Wells for the historical and contemporary political constructions of 'mother' by different South African political organisations and parties). The Malibongwe Conference Papers do discuss and address a broad spectrum of issues, from the nature and extent of women's representation in political structures to domestic and public violence against women. They contributed and contribute to the legitimate questioning of women's status and power in political organisations, community and workplace.

The ANC in its understanding of the political importance of women is more advanced than any other political organisation in South Africa. The ANC's writings, internal debates and political practices make visible the complex and contradictory process of activism, empowerment and subordination which characterise women's political participation in South Africa. The ANC's policies and politics reveal internal confusion and contradiction on many issues. In contrast the ANC expresses a consistent view that national liberation requires women's participation and that national liberation means women's liberation. The issue of women has been so politicised that more men than women express an in-house concern about the participation of women in the ANC's political structures.

Our intention is to participate in the debate on the ANC's political and theoretical understanding of women's role and participation in national liberation. Our criticism of the papers in the Malibongwe Collection is made with the following caveat. All the papers attempt to develop an understanding of women in South

African society. Insofar as they attempt this they distinguish themselves from radical and liberal writings on South Africa. In contrast the recovery and recording of historical and contemporary women's resistance to, and co-operation with, the South African state has not led to a rewriting or theoretical reformulation of the nature of South African society. In entering into this debate it is important to be aware of the constraints that a concern with theoretical correctness imposes on the discussion of the social, economic and political position of women in South Africa. Issues of class and race have tended to inform and even dominate this debate. Our entry is both political and theoretical. Whilst we are, on the one hand, aware that

[t]he mobilisation of women during the struggle that is necessary to gain national liberation is usually annulled after this has been achieved, and the number of women who continue to participate in political power, in theoretisation and in decision-making is very small. One reason for this is the fact that *although women participated in struggles in large numbers, they left the development of theory and strategy to male experts* (Mies, 1982:9).

We, on the other hand, share Walker's perspective that

An over-concern with the correctness of one's theoretical position vis-a-vis the compelling debates on race and class - with theoretical pedigree - has, perhaps, been one of the more insidious constraints on the development of women's studies in southern Africa. At least partly responsible, it seems, is the *concern for legitimacy in an extremely exacting political environment, where relevance requires so much more than fashionable rhetorical embellishments to one's academic work*. It is, however, a concern which can lead to a restrictive reluctance to question the authority of respected texts, even where these have little or nothing to say about gender, it can degenerate into the unilluminating repetition of formulae... (Walker, 1990:3).

In our critique of the theoretical and methodological assumptions of the Malibongwe Conference papers, we argue that the task of theorising gender struggles is a serious political task. It is clear that many of the papers do not attempt an explicit theoretical gender analysis and perhaps the authors would claim indemnity for a criticism of their lack of theoretical clarity. The papers, however, serve as important consciousness raisers within our political culture. This does not endemify the papers from a theoretical critique, as certain theoretical and methodological assumptions about gender and society can be identified and need to be discussed as part of a self critique within the liberation struggle.

The three fundamental theoretical and methodological assertions made by the Malibongwe Papers are: (1) it is assumed that an analysis of apartheid and capitalism in itself explains gender oppression and exploitation; (2) women are defined in patriarchal roles within the family, namely, as mothers, wives, daughters and sisters; and (3) an orthodox marxist-leninist analysis is appropriate in explaining gender oppression and exploitation in South Africa.

The Apartheid And Capitalism Theses

An historical analysis of South African society is present in many of the papers. A minority of the papers briefly touch upon the pre-colonial subordination of women.

The subordination of women in our country pre-dates colonial conquest. The asian and european communities whose members came to South Africa, as well as the indigenous african societies they encountered, were male dominated and patriarchal, although the forms of this domination differed from society to society. As a consequence, women's subordination has been institutionalised in the laws, as well as in the customs and practices of all racial groups. This is not to deny that distorted versions of african custom and tradition have been codified in law, but rather to stress that the oppression of women in South Africa is not only a consequence of conquest and white domination, and will not automatically cease with national liberation (Anon, 1990:1).

Noluloma Gwagwa is, however, correct in stating that 'although there is general consensus on the existence of a sexual division in these societies, conflicting analyses prevail in the literature as to whether such division was a reflection of gender relations or just an arbitrary allocation of tasks. Also whether by having the status of family head, the man had sole power over other family members' (Gwagwa, 1989:9 in Malibongwe Collection). Many authors, such as Simons (in Malibongwe Collection, 1990), argue that the pre-colonial household constituted an integral whole as a production and consumption unit and had full legal capacity as a family unit, not as individuals. For this reason women had more rights (both personal and property-wise) than have been conceded to them by alien courts. Consequently, most papers argue that the apartheid state is primarily responsible for the powerless position of women vis-a-vis men. Brigitte Mabandla opposes this position. 'Academics,' she asserts 'regard customary practices as central to women's oppression. This argument is inaccurate as factors contributing to the oppression of African women are much more complex than presented by these academics' (Mabandla, 1990:4-5).

We argue that the Malibongwe Papers themselves fail to grasp this complexity and revert to an over-simplified nostalgia for pre-colonial gender relationships. The controversial interpretations of lobolo, for example, as a mark of esteem of women or a system of property exchange, illustrates this problem. Throughout the papers it is assumed that an explanation of apartheid, capitalism and more specifically colonialism of a special type, in itself explains gender issues. There is an assumption that there was an equilibrium in social relations and that this equilibrium was disrupted by the impact of capitalist social relationships. This assumption is in our understanding a result of the Malibongwe Papers inheriting a tradition of gender free analysis. Furthermore, in academic, political and popular discourse we have an androcentric legacy.³ When women are discussed it is very much in the masculine

conception of women. Women are added on. Gender is not a fundamental category of analysis. This has largely been due to the acceptance of the theoretical position in which gender is understood alongside race oppression and class oppression. In the majority of political and economic texts produced on South Africa no mention or at best a passing reference is made to women.

Moving onto the twentieth century women continue to be discussed in isolation from men, both in the domestic and industrial spheres. Women are not analysed in relation to men and as a result there is no gendered analysis in the papers. The position of women is thus understood in the context of apartheid, racial capitalism and colonialism of a special type. Explicit or implicit in these formulations is the understanding that the removal of one or all of the above will automatically change the position of women. Gender as used in the papers becomes a phenomenon rather than a relationship between men and women. It is only in the context of an orthodox class analysis that there is a notion of exploitation. Therefore women are only exploited in their role as worker in the industrial sphere. Despite the extensive discussion of women and the family there is no notion of women's exploitation in the domestic sphere or by men. Generally there is no discussion of the contradictory and problematic relationship between men and women. The absence of a gendered analysis may partially account for the inability to change the race/class debate in South Africa. Insofar as women enter the race/class debate it is within the conception of triple oppression. The Malibongwe Papers' inadequate gender analysis does not assist in overcoming the theoretically inadequate race/class analysis.

The particular use of a materialist analysis as demonstrated in the discussion on migrant labour is unable to analyse the relationship between patriarchy and capitalism. This is a theoretical impediment. Gender relations are not an appendage of these social structures but are a major component, if not the central component, of their construction. Instead of an analysis there is a moral critique focusing on migrant labour and the consequent destruction of family life. The writings of Sachs on the family and apartheid illustrates the emotional and moral presentation of a theoretical understanding of the relationship between the African family and apartheid:

Family life for Africans was being made impossible in the reserves and illegal in the towns. There was nowhere in the country for the son of man and the daughters of women to lay their heads (Sachs, 1990:3).

A materialist analysis of migrant labour shows that patriarchy - which refers to the social organisation characterised by a hierarchical gender division of labour dominated by men - both predates and is essential to the capitalist mode of production and reproduction. Colonialism and settler expansion contributed to the process of land dispossession which changed social relationships. The outcome of this process was that young men engaged in waged labour away from their rural communities. Women, on the other hand, engaged in unwaged productive and reproductive labour. The majority of men and women were forced into these

occupations by older men. These changes reconstituted the nature and organisation of patriarchal relations. The general process of industrialisation accommodated the separation of domestic and industrial modes of production and reproduction. Bozzoli argues,

It was not simply the men's absence that placed the burden of domestic and agricultural labour on women; nor is it just that male tasks had been undermined by the destruction of the African states; it was also that these societies possessed the capacity to subordinate women's labour...; and that it is in this capacity that the resilience of these systems to full proletarianisation may have rested (Bozzoli, 1983:151).

The gender division of labour is a pre-requisite for a system of migrant labour to function at all. It is the women staying behind and carrying the responsibility for the production and reproduction of the present and future work force, that sustains 'traditional' society and makes migrant labour possible. It is well argued (Beinart, 1987; Bozzoli, 1983) that in its initial phase, migrant labour eliminated the social costs to the state and capital of generational and daily reproduction of labour. It is through women's contribution towards the maintenance and reproduction of labour within the reserves that the domestic mode of production absorbs the costs of production and reproduction of labour power. It is the gender division of labour that serves to lower the value of labour power for capital and in so doing enhance the relative rate of surplus value for capital accumulation.

The political implication of the above theoretical positions is that gender issues are removed from the realm of politics. This relationship is neither made visible nor political. The formulation of women's issues now is in the interests of male domination both politically and in practice.

Women's issues are addressed as a matter of strategy, as 'extraneous', within the Malibongwe Papers. Women only are seen as mothers and wives *within* a capitalist and racist society. (One woman who attended the conference said that in practice women were seen as potential Umkhonto We Sizwe recruits.) Women are not seen as having specific concerns and needs. According to the Malibongwe Papers, women are exploited as members of the working/oppressed class but not as women.

In our view this leads to a non-gendered class-race analysis which reproduces the existing confusion in the use of race and class as concepts in analysis.

The necessity to organise women arises from the movement's need to expand its political base and support. It would be a mistake for any mass-orientated political organisation to ignore the capacity of existing women's organisations. It is estimated that 70% of African women are organised in women's religious groups. The political recruitment of women is thus important not only because of their numbers but also because they are already in a variety of organisations which may not be overtly but are potentially political.⁴ Their analysis leads to the practice of women organising women (sanctioned by men) but men not sharing power with women.⁵

Women and The Family

Throughout the Malibongwe Papers women are defined within the mould of patriarchal roles, namely as mothers, wives, daughters and sisters. Calls to the solidarity of 'motherhood' are frequently employed to mobilise women (Gaitskell and Unterhalter, 1989:68-75). Even the orthodox marxist concepts of the need to socialise childcare and domestic work are mostly absent. Women are seen through their traditional patriarchal nurturing role. Within this framework, idealist hopes are expressed. In order to end the present patriarchal tyranny within the family, it is argued that it is necessary to reintroduce democracy. The democratising of the family would mean that 'in many cases these are questions which will be discussed within the family and agreed upon by those affected' (Sachs, 1990:6).

The papers that were presented at the Malibongwe conference do not see the family 'gender regime'⁶ (Connell, 1987) as a key site in the struggles informed by gender oppression between men and women, or more specifically, between husband and wife. Although acknowledged as a social construction through which gender relations are institutionalised (Gwagwa, 1989:2), the family is seen as a sanctified and idealised institution upon which society is - or rather should be - constructed. Proceeding from this theoretical framework, an immediate task in a post-apartheid South Africa would be the 'resuscitation' (Sachs, 1990:2) of those families torn apart by apartheid legislation and the productive demands of capitalist accumulation. This presents the 'daunting task' (Sachs, 1990:1) of rebuilding the family without incorporating the structural framework of patriarchal relations - institutionalised within existing family structures - into the new social construction.

The family, however, cannot be divorced from the broader society: these patriarchal relationships are encoded in institutions and social relationships which determine the gendered nature of that society. The diversity of family forms in contemporary South Africa reveals much about the process through which the capitalist mode of production became dominant. The structure of the family unit in pre-capitalist societies was based upon a network of extended kinship relations initiated by the marriage of a heterosexual partnership. Above all, the extended family was the basic unit of both production and reproduction in which relations were structured according to a hierarchical division along lines of age and gender (Henn, 1984:1-10). With the advent of capitalist relations of production, the productive capacity of pre-capitalist modes of production was continually undermined and thus the extended family unit was brought under increasing pressure. Although the impact of this process was uneven and requires an examination sensitive to specificity, the general effect was to separate people from their means of production and thus force them into urban areas where they would become dependent upon wage labour. Faced with new relations of production, these urban dwellers were compelled to reconstruct the family in a form compatible with capitalist relations of production. The result has been the construction of the nuclear family in which a married couple (or single parent)⁷ live together with their own or

adopted children.

Far from being the most basic unit upon which the more elaborate structures of society are constructed, the family is one of society's most complex products (Connell, 1987:121). In theorizing the family, an emphasis upon the location of the family within the broader society tends to overlook the relationships 'so extended in time, so intensive in contact, so dense in their interweaving of economics, emotion, power and resistance' (Connell, 1987:121) that knit the family together and constitute the social fabric through which the day-to-day gender struggles within the household are articulated. Above all, the gender regime within the family is informed by a structure of patriarchal relations in which women are subordinated to men and the young subordinated to the old. These relations are reproduced at both an institutional and ideological level. The two levels neatly converge in the process of socialization. Within the family, 'girls are socialized to be obedient to men, respect them and prepare food for them', for the 'husband is regarded as the head of the family' and the wife 'treated as a minor' (Border Region, in Malibongwe Collection, 1990:2).

Although the Malibongwe Conference Papers reflect a partial concern with the patriarchal relations embedded within the family institution, the conflict within the family gender regime is usually attributed to the destructive influence of external forces undermining the idealised and sanctified family, that is, the triple alliance of apartheid, capitalist relations of production and reproduction, and the state.⁸ In an articulate and well argued paper, Nolulamo Gwagwa contends that the family is consistently changed and maintained by forces outside itself, especially state intervention through economic, political and social policies (1989:2). Not only does this analysis ignore the play of gender relations within the family gender regime, but it fails to provide an understanding of the nature of this change. This is not to deny the importance of external forces in the reconstruction of the family, but rather to locate this change within the relations of the family gender regime.

One of the most fundamental sites of struggles within the family gender regime concerns the division of labour in the process of social reproduction. The division of tasks is usually informed by a gendered division that defines certain kinds of work as being domestic, unpaid and usually women's and other kinds as public, paid and usually men's (Connell, 1987:122; Staudt, 1987:201). Moreover, this division is further influenced by the presence of children in two ways. Due to the failure of both the state and capital to intervene in the process through which the black labour force is reproduced (Cock et al, 1986:68), the work involved in childrearing is usually done without pay by women in the household. Secondly, the children are drawn into the division of labour and are usually allocated tasks along lines of gender.

The burdens of domestic labour have thus tended to confine women to the domestic or private sphere where they have been described as being excluded from socially productive work.⁹ Clara argues that part of the process of emancipation lies

in the 'inclusion of women in the economy and (the removal of) the chains that bind women to the home' (1989:41). This immediately enters into the 'domestic labour debate' concerning the value of domestic labour and thus its conceptualization as either productive or unproductive labour. Although the debate falls beyond the scope of this paper, it is important to note that domestic labour is an integral part of the capitalist mode of production in that it produces use values necessary for the production and reproduction of labour power (Cock, 1980:13; Bie Nio Ong, 1986:75). Moreover, although domestic labour itself is not commoditised, its value is realised through the exchange of the labour power it produces and reproduces. The recognition of women's labour within the domestic sphere as being productive, has profound implications for the strategy of women's liberation. Most importantly, it redirects our attention to the patriarchal oppression of the gender order in the home.

The gender division of labour has placed the burden of social reproduction upon women and children but it has provided women with an opportunity to increase their power within the gender regime. Women in particular classes and under specific social conditions have made use of their monopoly of certain skills and knowledge and through the informal economic sector have gained access to valuable economic resources (Robertson and Berger, 1986). Access to economic resources has enabled increasing numbers of employed urban African women to question the marriage relationship and the family structures moulded around that relationship. 'Of course I want children', declared an unmarried woman, 'but I don't want to get married. I think I'm happy without a man. Some men think that they must marry you and then sit in the house' (Mullins, 1982:74, cited in Cock et al, 1986:70). Further, the decision to reject the marriage relationship is frequently informed by the physical and sexual violence inflicted upon women within the household. 'A common feature of South African family life', declared the Natal Organisation of Women, 'is the unusually high presence of family violence' (in Malibongwe Collection, 1990:19). Although the acknowledgement of incest, rape, batterings and forms of psychological and emotional violence in the 'very haven of the family home' (Western Cape Region, in Malibongwe Collection, 1990:3) has been an important step in understanding the nature of oppression within the family gender regime, it is important to locate these issues in the process through which women are reconstructing the family unit.

A growing number of women, by rejecting marriage and reconstructing the family as a single women-headed household, have presented the liberation movement and women's organisations with a new set of challenges. Albie Sachs' assertion that the 'right to live a normal life in the context of the nuclear family becomes a feminist demand in South Africa' (in Malibongwe Collection, 1990:15) needs to be carefully reconsidered. The reconstruction of the 'African' family similarly undermines the nuclear family. However, the deconstruction of the nuclear family serves neither the interests of capital, nor those whose interests were vested in the asymmetrical

gender relations within the family. For the ruling class, the propagation of the idea 'of a stable, nuclear family unit' (Natal Organisation of Women, in Malibongwe Collection, 1990:22) is central to the control, regulation, and reproduction of the labour force. On the other hand, the interests of capital neatly dovetail with those interests vested in the structure of the nuclear family to propagate the notion of the nuclear family as 'the norm, and therefore (the) more desirable' (Western Cape Region, in Malibongwe Collection, 1990:2) form of family structure. Thus the notions of 'normal life' can no longer be based upon the assumption of the harmonious nuclear family but must encapsulate a consideration of the concrete, present needs and desire of African working class women.

While a growing number of women have rejected the patriarchal family, many women have turned to the family structure as a source of security and unit of social organisation. Through the social networks which bond women together and provide assistance in fulfilling their responsibility for the social reproduction of the household, women are able to organise around issues relating to their daily practical needs. However, by drawing upon the traditional family structure as the basis for their struggles, these women face the danger of fostering an 'intensely conservative ideology' (Bozzoli, 1983:165) that serves to consolidate the patriarchal nature of gender relations within the family gender regime. This is not to dismiss the potential of family-based social networks in mobilizing women for the broader struggle of national liberation; rather, it is to focus our attention upon the needs for formulating a coherent strategy to address gender oppression within the family.

Throughout this section of the paper, it has been argued that the formulation of a national policy to co-ordinate the struggles for women's liberation must locate the oppression of women at the heart of gender oppression, that is, in the unequal gender relations within institutions and relationships in society. This is not to deny the day-to-day gender struggles which often deviate from, and even contradict, the broader structures of domination. Rather, it is to acknowledge that these local victories or deviations do not overthrow oppression in terms of the global or macro-relationship of power in the gender order of society as a whole (Connell, 1987:111).

The importance of the family lies in its centrality to the process by which society is both socially and biologically reproduced. It is within this context that the family gender regime becomes a key site in the unfolding conflict between men and women. In order to reconstitute the rules in which the state of play in gender relations occurs, the policies formulated throughout the Malibongwe Papers place much of their emphasis upon the construction of a legal framework freed of institutionalised gender oppression. However, as Gwagwa has noted, '(1) legal reform, while providing a useful institutional framework, can never, on its own, produce equal familial relations' (1989:26). Despite the limited effects of legal reform, a key question concerns the state and whether it can ever accommodate the reconstruction of a society free of gender oppression. Although the state is frequen-

ly noted for its biased gender representation of state personnel, it is seldom seen as institutionalising it (Connell, 1987). If we accept that the state is a gender regime embodying and regulating relations of gender oppression, then the question that remains is whether 'women can transform (the) edifice responsible for undermining their economic and political activities' (Staudt, 1986:208).

Marxist-leninist Analysis

The importance of an orthodox marxist-leninist analysis is clearly formulated by some of the papers. Until such time as the membership of the SACP is made public we are unable to specify that authors are party members despite a clear marxist analysis in their papers. Clara (1989), for example, rejects 'feminism' as a reformist ideology that appeals strongly to middle class women. Clara argues that marxist-leninist theory is not blind to women's oppression and provides the basic tools of analysis to understand and change concrete realities:

When we analyse socialist countries we find that much more still needs to be done for women's emancipation and participation. That does not mean that our theory is wrong, but rather that the objective conditions have not matured sufficiently for full women's emancipation to take root, and that the ruling party in those countries has not organised around the women's question adequately. Any attempt to revise our theory dilutes the content of our revolution and distracts us from the immediate and long-term goals (Clara, 1989:39).

Whilst agreeing with Clara about the reformist nature of liberal western feminism, we do not share her faith in orthodox marxism. Marxist materialism does provide some theoretical tools, but they are not always appropriate or sufficient. The theory is underdeveloped and this needs to be considered. This is neither digressionary nor divisive but an essential part of our theoretical development.

In marxism exploitation is linked to the distribution of surplus value. Exploitation occurs through the extraction of surplus value in the labour process. For marxists, the production of exchange value determines social value, that is, the realisation of surplus value through the process of exchange. We oppose exclusive application of exchange value to determine the social value of production, in that it excludes the use values embodied within labour power. We, therefore, agree with Cock that 'whether service workers are productive or unproductive, is a question that affects only the form of their exploitation, not the issue whether they are exploited or not' (Cock, 1980:12).

Within our materialist analysis, women are exploited under capitalism; this is made evident by an analysis of their relationship to the means of production and their position as a variable industrial reserve army of labour. The reality that women form part of the industrial reserve army of labour has important implications for our liberation struggle. Marx argues that the general tendency of wages is that these are regulated by the expansion and contraction of the industrial reserve army. In applying this analysis to a contemporary industrial society, we can argue that

women's employment (and unemployment) exerts pressure on wages (since their wages are lower than men's wages). However, this pressure can be sustained only if the industrial reserve army remains large enough both to keep women's wages low and to keep women's labour secondary to men's labour. Women's structural unemployment is thus an important lever not only for keeping women's wages low but also wages in general, and for keeping women primarily involved in the domestic mode of production. Consequently, their entrance into the industrial mode of production is moulded by their role as domestic workers, that is, housewives.

Current changes in the labour process, specifically the transformation towards post-fordist production techniques means that the significance of the industrial reserve army of labour declines because wages are no longer based on the market forces of unskilled labour as the demand is for skilled labour. The struggle around the gender construction of this skilled labour is one of the key terrains of conflict involving access to waged labour.

Changes in men's social responsibility to their children has reconstituted gender relationships. Changing marriage relationships force some women into the labour market and they constitute the fastest growing social category in all societies, namely, women-headed households. However, domestic relationships generally are unchanged and together with the social and economic necessity of waged labour for men and women in families, have increased the burden placed upon women. Other women, in response to conflict within the family gender regime, have chosen to enter the labour market and become heads of single-headed households.

These women face the reality that their labour is appropriated to a greater extent than that of men because it is often assumed, or argued (by employers and employees alike), that women are not primary breadwinners with dependents. According to Hall, women-headed families form the fastest growing sector of populations world wide (Hall, 1980:4). Similarly, in developing countries, as much as 50% of women are chief breadwinners of their households (Jones, 1980:7). However, many women are faced with the reality that their wages are lower than the cost of the reproduction of their own labour-power. Tessa Marcus correctly points out that 'it is in female-headed households that poverty and destitution are also most concentrated, because women's social oppression deliberately and severely restricts their access to employment in a whole number of ways' (Marcus, 1988:98). The main problems with the family-wage-social-reality argument ('men's wages ought to be enough to support the entire family' - Oren, quoted by Hunt, 1980:1) and one of its implications are:

it increases women's dependence both on men (and their wages) and on the socially de-valued domestic mode of production for the creation of self-esteem. Women are caught up in the 'second division' running in a 'race' that does not really count. Connell (1987:122) argues that class position changes the benefits of domestic work for women, for example, the structure of production in working class families revolves around the wage. The low wages paid to the working class means that

unpaid domestic provides all the reproductive labour. In contrast, in bourgeois families, reproductive labour is often done by paid workers, therefore the focus is on the husband's career as this enhances the material position of the wife and family.

Whilst the eradication of the unemployment experienced by millions of South Africans will necessarily put pressure on us to revert back to a family-wage-logic, we need to keep the above reality in mind, and need to think beyond 'patriarchal' answers to these problems.

Albie Sachs argues that 'the political system of apartheid was little more than the superstructure of migrant labour' (Sachs, 1990:3). Most papers share this materialist assumption with Sachs. However, whilst most papers address some so-called 'sexist issues' such as control of fertility, violence against women, general patriarchal tyranny, etc, they trivialise so-called 'women's issues' in restricting them to certain aspects of the sphere of reproduction. The focus is thus primarily on superstructural issues and consequently on demands to root out 'discrimination' against women. In general the Malibongwe Papers thus fall within the reformist tradition of liberal western feminism, despite arguing so strongly against it. All of the papers concentrate on the eradication of women's oppression. This oppression is seen as follows -

In the South African context the specific form of gender oppression is conditioned by two key socio-political factors:

- 1.the national oppression of the majority by the white ruling bloc;
and
- 2.the exploitation of workers under capitalist relations (Natal Organisation of Women, Malibongwe Collection, 1990:1).

In order to eradicate gender oppression, women are thus called upon to join the national democratic revolution and overthrow the conditions which facilitate their oppression - in other words, apartheid and capitalism.

To facilitate this unity in action, our desire for a national organisation of women should be made a reality, encompassing all women in our society, with particular attention being paid to mobilising our women in the rural areas (Programme of Action, Malibongwe Collection, 1990:2).

The Politics of Organising Women

Women's involvement in political activity may be overt or covert depending on the particular historical circumstances. Their access to positions of power and authority is frequently of brief duration and generally related to the re-structuring of power relations in a particular society (for example, the modernisation of Iran and Tunisia involved the compulsory emancipation of women; the early extension of the franchise to white colonial women was to ensure settler control and not a reflection of women's political struggles). We would argue that people who are powerless, be they women, workers or others, do not have the base from which to negotiate the terms of their political involvement. Women's status and position in

South Africa is structured by the particular intersections of class, race and gender.

That black women in South Africa suffer a triple oppression of gender, race and class, has become a rhetorical commonplace. White women too, it is generally recognised, are discriminated against as women, although their membership of a privileged racial group softens the impact of gender discrimination and works against their identification with black women as women, with shared problems (Walker, 1990:2).

The 'rhetorical commonplace' is the central point of the controversy amongst men and women engaged in the struggle for national liberation. The relationship of gender to colour and of gender to class is of theoretical and empirical importance. The theoretical formulations of these relationships often conceal the central issue, namely, the subordination of women to men as a key feature of social organization. For some movement writers and activists, feminism is rejected as being inappropriate, racist in intent and imperialist in content. Amadiume shares the view of many Africanists who argue that women's subordination is a phenomenon of colonialism and capitalism. Her contention is that feminism is an old phenomenon in Africa. She thus legitimates the struggle for equality and the cessation of the subordination of African women to men by drawing upon pre-colonial gender relationships.

The meaning of the word (feminist) as I have used it is a political consciousness by women which leads to a strong sense of self-awareness, self-esteem, female solidarity and consequently, the questioning and challenging of gender inequalities in social systems and institutions. As will be seen from Igbo data, militant feminism, a constant reality for women in traditional Igbo societies, can be said to be a comparatively new phenomenon in the Western world and the monopoly of an elitist view (Amadiume, 1987:10).

The question 'has gender become less important a principle of social organisation over time?' (Walker, 1990:4) is not merely of historical interest in South Africa. Guy (1990:45-47) argues that control over women's production and reproduction was the basis of pre-capitalist southern African societies. The struggle to end racial domination on the African continent, colours this argument and reconstitutes the position of women in pre-capitalist societies as being separate from men. This separation, or gender division, it is argued, allowed for equality between men and women which was undermined and distorted by colonialism and capitalism. This analysis *and* the theoretical formulation that the full emancipation of women can only be achieved within a socialist economy, illegitimises and silences gender struggles. They underpin the argument that the death of racial domination and capitalism will give birth to the emancipation of women.

Theoretical formulations inform the questions we ask and shape our interpretation of empirical evidence. This, in turn, influences and affects the content of political programmes for national liberation and the place that women's emancipation occupies in the programme for national liberation. The emancipation of women, the

ending of subordination, requires more than words.

... such a declaration, ..., can amount to no more than a token gesture, if the material, ideological, educational and cultural underpinnings of gender oppression are not simultaneously addressed, so as to provide a basis for giving reality to national equality (Anon, 1990b:1).

Anonymous argues that the foundations for equality can and must be laid within the national liberation movement now. This is an important and decisive break with the argument that to call for non-sexist practices, the equal participation of women in decision-making and in leadership, divides and weakens the struggle for national liberation. Such demands have been, and are frequently, interpreted by both black and white women and men as coming from feminists. Their concerns and political demands are seen variously as eurocentric, reformist, bourgeois and/or liberal. It is not appropriate to explore the theoretical and political objections to 'western' feminist theory, policy and practices raised by men and women in South Africa. This response is not specific to South Africa but is echoed by many political activists who do not identify themselves as European or American. These views are held and advanced by both women and the majority of men, black and white in Africa. This construction of current gender relationships as being unnatural and alien leads to the formulation and a political project to return to the natural order, for example, reconstructing the African family which includes kinship, gender and generational relationships. (See Amadiume, 1987; Clara, 1989; Makamure, 1984; SWAPO Women's Solidarity Campaign Namibia Support Committee, 1986; and Turok, 1986). This position with respect to the South African struggle is argued by Clara:

(i)n South Africa, the dominant contradiction is the national oppression of the black people, and more specifically the African people. The determinant contradiction... is... the class struggle...

But there are many other contradictions within our society too - and the oppression of women is the most far-reaching of these 'other contradictions', ... If we understand that the women question is, at this point in time a subordinate, less antagonistic contradiction in South Africa, then we will draw correct conclusions about when and how to organise around women's experiences in the different stages of our revolution. It should be clear that the total emancipation of women is only realisable under a developed socialist economy, and only if, in each stage of our revolution, we organise women to participate fully and raise their demands as part of the people's demands (Clara, 1989:2-3).

Whilst resistance is the fabric of struggle, activists ignore - to their cost - the acquiescence of the oppressed and subordinated to their domination and exploitation by men, and/or the ruling class. Control and subordination are reproduced through socialisation, ideology and visual experience. Writers in the Malibongwe Collection emphasise all or some of these aspects in their contributions. In papers, Celile, Anderson and Njanana cite white capitalist control of the press as the

explanation for the exclusion of ordinary women and women, generally, from the mass media. The Natal Organisation of Women (NOW) concurs that

(t)he image of women in the media reinforces the ruling ideology of white supremacy, capitalism and patriarchy. They suggest, to men and women, the reality we are expected to conform to. Children watching these images learn very early what is expected of them as girls and boys and in the future as adults (NOW, Malibongwe Collection, 1990:22).

The colour identity of those who own the newspapers and the capitalist nature of their enterprises is only a partial explanation of the depiction of women and workers as advertising aids or the restriction of women to the women's pages and the general absence of workers from the public eye. In South Africa we have a number of anti-apartheid publications many of which are supportive of the national liberation movement, or are owned by national liberation organisations and paid for through external funding. The image of women in these papers is no different. The absence of political women on our newspaper and journal pages, cannot be explained by reference to capitalism or racism but reflects the real absence of women in political leadership. Scrutiny of the statistical data points to the fact that neither socialist countries nor those countries which have achieved freedom from imperialist rule have redressed the exclusion of women from political office.

Family issues - for example, the division of labour, allocation of resources for education and food along gender lines, freedom from domestic labour and therefore access to leisure or rest, and domestic violence - if seen only as women's issues merely perpetuate the social division of reproduction (daily and generational) and the subordination of women's concerns. This subordination of 'women's concerns' in the so-called private sphere, is part of the continuum which subordinates 'women's issues' in the so-called public sphere. Some of the issues coming from the public sphere are readily identified as political issues whereas others are not. The most obvious are: inequalities in access to skill acquisition and employment opportunities, unequal wages for equal work, inequality in the occurrence of rape and vulnerability to physical assault, distinct from, but including, sexual assault. Struggles around these inequalities *do contest* the gender organisation of society and *do challenge* women's subordination.

These struggles will not divide men and women in the national liberation struggle if the national liberation struggle is accompanied by a revisioning of society. Struggles to end class domination and racial domination do not, in themselves, challenge the gender and ageist organising principles of both capitalist and socialist societies. Some of these 'women's issues' are more or less divisive depending on the prevailing economic conditions.

A noted feature of trade union demands in South Africa over the last two decades, has been their call for a living wage and not a family wage. More recently, within the context of growing unemployment and discussions around the shape of South Africa's future economic order, voices are heard which demand a 'family' wage

and the restriction of formal employment to the head of the household. Calls for a family wage and/or public protests at the employment of women in factories in the face of men's unemployment, readily enter the public political arena and become political issues of justice and reasonableness. They are connected to the 'logic' of ensuring the employment of a family member who can obtain the highest wage. The reality of the significant number of single women-headed households is not incorporated into these demands nor in the generalised call for the reconstruction of the family as discussed in the Malibongwe Papers.

The call for the reconstruction of the family can not be separated from the real problem of social disorder manifested by the 'problem of the youth'. The family historically is an important site of social control, it is one of the key organising structures of socialisation and of coercion. It is a historical feature of African family life that boys at a certain age enter the rite de passage to adulthood by separation from their mothers. This separation is characterised by their sanctioned right to only accept the authority of adult men. Urbanisation, migrant labour and poverty combine to produce a family form which is women-headed, with the infrequent presence of an adult man who in many instances is not the 'father' and therefore a properly constituted authority figure. KwaZulu Chief Minister M Buthelezi is one of many 'homeland' leaders engaged in a battle to control 'youths' and re-establish the authority of the patriarchy. A perception shared by many across the colour lines is that African youths constitute a social problem and they represent 'lost generations'.

The elimination of gender inequalities within the household is a more difficult political task. The subordination of women and girls is a complex interweaving of ties of affection, marital and filial duty and obligation, and material survival. This complex web shapes the socialisation of young girls as daughters, sisters, wives and mothers and young boys in their respective roles. They are potential sites of struggle between not only men and women but between mothers and daughters, mothers-in-law and daughters-in-law. Even the most private of households is not free from the surveillance and influence of the external world, be it the media, the state or the neighbours. These agents can be used to buttress and reproduce the subordination of women but equally they can be used to reconstruct the private and the public as a single world of equal value and importance, a site of equality between women and men.

There is no history or tradition within South Africa which recognises gender conflict as political conflict. South Africans unquestioningly accept the idea of racial conflict, ethnic conflict and religious conflict as being political. The need for national unity and the desire to mobilise women within the national liberation movement is contradictory. The mobilisation of women may lead to the expression of gender conflict which has to be suppressed or contained for the purpose of national unity. The construction of racism and class exploitation by the national liberation movement precludes a gendered analysis of both class and race in South

Africa. This absence of a language enabling gender conflicts to be politicised and expressed as resistance to the political, economic and social domination of women by men occurs in a context where the penalties of resistance and the rewards of acquiescence shape women's material existence. Acquiescence is a strategy of compliance in a conflict situation. For the women at the Malibongwe Conference the rewards of consensus and national unity may be great and can not be necessarily interpreted as compliance or an historically inevitable choice.

South African history reveals not only a subversion and thwarting of women's attempts to resist men's domination but more recently an active intervention to silence those women and men who have the language to identify politically the complexity of the subordination of women in South Africa. The historic silence of the ANC over the suffrage debate in the 1920s is matched by the SACP's amnesia of its own history with regard to the mobilisation and organisation of white and black women into women's committees in the 1930s. The absence of theoretical debates on the women's question in the CPSA/SACP despite their close links with, for example, the Communist parties of Cuba and GDR is remarkable. The accusations levelled at individuals who raise the question of gender practices and politics are silenced by accusations of 'imported western feminist ideas' or, more damning 'bourgeois ideas and demands'. This is countered by the occasional progressive interventions made by leadership within the ANC, for example ANC President Oliver Tambo, in this debate in 1981:

(i) the struggle to conquer oppression in our country is the weaker for the traditionalist conservative and primitive restraints imposed on women by man-dominated structures within our Movement, as also because of equally traditionalist attitudes of surrender and submission on the part of women (Tambo cited in Anon, 1990b).

The legitimisation of women's struggle for emancipation in national liberation movements in southern Africa came from Frelimo President, Samora Machel in 1973. 'The liberation of women is a fundamental necessity for the revolution, a guarantee of its continuity and a condition for its success' (in Armfred, 1988:5).

The liberation of women from the control of fathers, uncles, husbands or brothers was necessary for the advancement of the national liberation struggle in Mozambique. Women's role as mobilisers of the peasant population necessitated a restructuring of the gender division of production in the house and in the fields. This restructuring was at times achieved through the active political intervention of Frelimo cadres - equality between men and women was not only discussed but a lived political, social and economic reality. In the face of people's resistance to this restructuring

...we called in Frelimo. I remember a case of one man who was beating his wife. We tied his arms behind his back and took him to Frelimo... There was no division, no resentment. One week the woman was away, another man. When the woman was away, it was the husband who did the housework and looked after the children.

Men and women worked together for the same goal (Habiba, quoted in Arnfred, 1988:6)

Changed historical conditions do not necessarily eliminate 'old' practices but frequently require the reconstitution of those practices. This theoretical assertion is seen in many instances of social practice but is most clearly visible in gender relations. Once this is understood we can no longer talk of the 'naturalness' of men's domination but must understand their domination as an outcome of political and social struggle.

The achievement of Mozambican independence meant changed political and economic conditions. The cities replaced the rural areas as loci of power, the educated dominated the political structures and displaced and replaced illiterate non-Portuguese speaking rural women and men. These changes underpin Machel's reformulation of the nature of women's subordination:

...the antagonistic contradiction is not found between man and woman, but rather between women and the social order, between all exploited women and men and the social order (Machel cited in Arnfred, 1988:11);

a position which was rejected in the same year by Mozambique Women's Organisation (OMM) who argued that:

the necessity of struggle between women and men is not acknowledged: women's demands are condemned as the 'radicalism of the petty bourgeoisie' (OMM cited in Arnfred, 1988:5).

Machel's argument implies that the social revolution is incomplete but more significantly silences the domestic and workplace struggles over the division of labour which had specifically been politicised during the struggle for liberation.

The Western Cape's paper to the Malibongwe Conference asserts that '(w)e also realise that national liberation and socialism do not guarantee the emancipation of women' (Western Cape Region, 1990:11).

We suggest that economic underdevelopment and poverty are not in themselves explanations for the resource allocation choices made by political leaders. In the absence of a gender struggle, leaders make 'ungendered' decisions that are detrimental to women. The decision to allocate resources to space research and the decision not to manufacture cotton wool to meet women's sanitary needs in respect of themselves and infants are engendered political decisions. The force of engendered political decisions is demonstrated in the restructuring of the economies of socialist eastern Europe. On the grounds of insufficient state resources, it was decided in February 1990 to close East German creches. This forced many East German women out of employment (90% of East German women eligible for employment were employed in 1989) and into the home. The failure to identify generational reproduction as a 'general affair' and not an 'own (women's) affair' results in intense social, economic and emotional dislocation. It does reduce the ranks of the potentially unemployable in the new German state.

The national liberation movement in South Africa has not been forced by past or

prevailing conditions to restructure production and the gender division of labour. FRELIMO, for example, both during and after liberation required the active involvement of women initially in arms transport ('women swapped the load of wood for the load of arms') and subsequently in food and cash crop production. In South Africa the role of women's organisations in mobilising communities for resistance to white domination, although documented in the 'struggle' press, does not lead to their inclusion into local, regional and national political positions. Whilst women activists, youth activists and workers prepare the ground and sow the seeds these are reaped by men in their roles as political, trade union, church or community leaders. The rewards to men of these leadership positions were and are considerable. They become controllers and allocators of (i) foreign donated financial resources; and (ii) internal and external patronage.

The Malibongwe Papers identify women, workers and students as key actors in the struggle for national liberation. The importance of mobilising women is frequently stressed in the Papers and is evident in the call for the formation of a national women's organisation. The establishment of the African National Congress as a political party has affected attitudes to women's mobilisation. Organisations within the national liberation movement which had resisted the establishment of women's sections and even strongly opposed the establishment of separate women's organisations are forming women's sections. In one case the elected chair of the women's section of a youth organisation is a man.

The mobilisation of women is the task not of women alone or of men alone, but of all of us, men and women alike ... women have a duty to liberate (us) men from antique attitudes about the place and role of women in society and in the development and direction of our revolutionary struggle (Tambo cited in Anon, 1990b:5).

Irrespective of the motives for the establishment of women and youth sections of organisations and the establishment of a national women's and students' organisations, the consequence of such developments is the division of the political terrain and the inevitable division of political leadership positions along gender lines. This affects women's participation in decision-making. Particular categories of men, unlike women, workers and youth who are all organised separately, will not face the burden of double political duty. The ensuing gender and class division of political labour become restrictive practices limiting the availability of workers, women and youth for political office. Whilst women number more than 50% of the total population, 60% of people in South Africa are classified as youths, that is, under 25 years of age. The factors identified above, together with rural inhabitants' (the majority of whom are women) economic and educational disadvantages, place severe limitations on the democratisation of South African society and demand vigilant policy formulation and implementation by the national liberation movement.

A recurring theme in the Malibongwe Papers is the empowerment of women. The Programme of Action tempers expectation that national liberation will necessarily

emancipate women:

The emancipation of women in South Africa requires national liberation, the transformation of gender relations and an end to exploitation. We believe that our emancipation can only be addressed as part of a total revolutionary transformation of the (sic) South African social and economic relations. National liberation does not automatically guarantee the emancipation of women (Programme of Action, 1990:1).

The women of the Western Cape identify, along with other contributors, empowerment of women as one of the keys to emancipating women:

'The people shall govern' in our context therefore refers to the process whereby we will empower women to use their vote effectively - mass education and literacy projects and campaigns are vital in this regard. Women should be adequately represented on all layers of decision-making bodies. We must be wary of tokenism - all women delegates must be empowered for their positions through on-the-job/in-built training programmes and affirmative actions. It is also imperative that there is a specific percentage of women delegates in all departments, both at local and central government level (Western Cape Region, 1990).

The call by some women's organisations for the political empowerment of women distinguishes these organisations from other women's organisations. The majority of South African women are not members of political organisations but are members of women's church groups. It is estimated that 70% of African women are members of church groups. Very few women in church organisations are engaged in political struggles around the exclusion of women from church hierarchies. Women in church organisations constituted and constitute a potential pool of support for political parties (Butler, 1987; Eales, 1989; Gaitskell and Unterhalter, 1989; Walker, 1990). Women constitute the most organised sector of South African society but they are not visible. They are not visible in the media nor in daily life other than as consumers. Seven decades of a women's section of the African National Congress has not led to equality of participation. New ways are needed to allow for the equal participation of women, workers (men and women) and youths (girls and boys). The latter categories are popularly represented as categories of men only. It does not follow that involvement in women's organisation develops a critical understanding of gender relations amongst women nor that the organisation will be a vehicle for gender struggle in society. On the contrary, women's organisations are important institutions in the conservation of women's subordination. They police the boundaries of the gender division of labour, reproduce the cultural separateness of women from men and produce 'devout domesticity' (Gaitskell, 1990:257).

The lived reality of political power involves a struggle between sectional interests and previously appropriate political programmes. The former frequently overturns the latter once national liberation is achieved. New alliances must be constructed which reflect newly constituted interests. China, Zimbabwe, Mozambique and

Algeria are cases where either urban-based or rural-based liberation movements forged alliances with urban or rural elements in order to consolidate their rule. Consolidation of power frequently requires co-option of groups and the adoption of policies inimical to particular sections of the national liberation movement, this is most frequently women for a number of reasons and the working class. A number of factors, including their role in production and reproduction, competition for political position and uneven or low levels of organisation, produce this pattern of events.

The alliances that the national liberation movement will forge remains unclear in this transitional phase. The role of women, youth and workers as mobilisers in the struggle is acknowledged and encouraged by the national leadership. In the national liberation movement youth organisations are overtly and explicitly masculinist and generally resistant to the politics of women's liberation. Youth organisations have historically functioned and continue to function as training grounds for future leaders (adult men) and containers of politically ambitious young men. Whereas circumcision or marriage conferred African adulthood (women never became adults) it is only on reaching 35 years of age that men are compelled to leave the ANC youth organisation. It is the future which will pass the historical verdict as to whether the organisations of women and youths are containers for bodies to support the struggle for men to achieve political power or vehicles for the liberation of all oppressed people. Strengths and weaknesses of the national liberation movement can be gauged through a scrutiny of the political campaigns, the extent of training undertaken to empower women and the practice of affirmative action to redress the historical disadvantage of women and the working class.

The exigencies of exile life and unchallenged political practices only partially account for the inadequate representation of women in decision-making positions within the ANC. The introduction of a minimum number of positions for women on the National and Regional Executive Committees of the ANC led to the withdrawal of special reserved places on the executives committees for ANC Women's League representatives.

Fundamental to the emancipation of women is the right to participate fully and on a basis of equality in all decision making. This is of crucial importance for post apartheid South Africa, but needs to be implemented now within the ANC and the mass democratic movement, where the absence of women at decision and policy making levels is glaring and makes nonsense of any theoretical commitment to emancipation.

The argument that women need to be developed is no more valid than when it was used by colonialists to deny Africans their right to self-determination. While acknowledging that women have been disadvantaged in education, and often lack experience and skills, there is a tremendous under-utilisation of the many capable women in the liberation movement. There are many all-male structures within the ANC including some whose responsibilities include

strategising on internal mobilisation which by definition includes women. By allowing such practices to continue we are ensuring that our organisation operates with one hand effectively amputated (Anon, 1990:3).

The extent to which South African women occupy the political spaces created by the Malibongwe Conference will depend on prevailing political and economic conditions. The ANC's contribution to the debate and discussion of women's rights in a new South Africa has influenced the Democratic Party of South Africa (DP). The DP women's caucus actively occupies the political space provided by the DP's identification as a political party of opposition committed to civil liberties now and in a 'new' South Africa. Discussion and formulation of policies on affirmative action, quotas and women's representation addresses the political question of women's participation. The ANC and the DP are addressing different constituencies but members of both parties deem it politically necessary to commit themselves publicly on women's issues. In contrast the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC), the National Party (NP) and the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) remain publicly silent on the position of women in their political organisations and in society. The position and future status of women will be shaped by the strength of different political groupings, their national and regional character as well as the specific political alliances which are formed in the short to medium term. We argue that women's organisational strength in conjunction with the prevailing political conditions is not sufficient to determine their position in the 'new' South Africa. We suggest that theoretical analyses and particular political strategies are important in shaping the future status and position of women.

The government's strategy of providing structural support for low-scale violence not only achieves its aim of making too costly the public support of the ANC but silences and prevents attempts at the democratisation of South African society. It imposes quite specific constraints on the ANC's intent to legitimate gender struggles and eliminate gender oppressive relationships within the ANC. Gender issues and politics increasingly competes and conflicts with the necessity of fighting for political survival. The political and social conditions are obstacles to the tasks of creating a new nation, forging new political alliances and of reintegrating individuals and groups into a common society. Moral commitment to a non-sexist and non-racist South Africa is unlikely to withstand the constraints described above. It is this perspective which shapes our view that the depoliticising of gender struggles in the Malibongwe Papers is a cause for concern.

We see our position as challenging the Malibongwe Papers in three ways: (1) gender oppression and the exploitation of women (and young men) are not explained by apartheid and capitalism; (2) whilst women must be understood in relation to men, this relationship is not exclusively a relationship defined by the family. We suggest that the issue of 'the restoration of the family' will be amongst the most sensitive and politically explosive issues in the short-term; and (3) orthodox historical materialism is unable to explain gender oppression and gender

exploitation as it can give no account of the structure of gender relations.

The central feature of the sexual division of labour is its *separation* of women from men, that is, its differentiation; whereas the gendered pattern of authority, control and coercion is marked by the *unequal incorporation* of women into society. The third structural element is that of sexual social relationships. The social patterning of desire which is characterised by ambivalence, that is, *simultaneous feelings of affection and hostility*. This dimension constitutes a powerful force in binding and dividing human beings. Racial and class divisions have produced patterns of relationships which complicate in specific ways the internal differentiation, historical unevenness and internal contradictions inherent in the structure of gender relations. Within South Africa, for example, colonialisms (Dutch and British), varied labour forms and institutionalised racism coexisted with institutionalised domestic labour. The division of labour, power relations and sexual practices were and are complex interactions of coercion, co-operation and resistance.

Gender, class, race, authority and locality combine with (1) uneven levels of unemployment; (2) competition for scarce resources (land, shelter, employment, trading licences, taxis, etc); (3) clan organised male migrant labour which is buttressed and at times contradicted by patrimonialism. This produces the necessary climate for destabilisation. The destabilisation (1) undermines the ANC; (2) allows for the constitution of interests ostensibly no longer exclusively white and the construction of a political alliance.

Both the interests constituted and the alliance constructed in this period necessitate the reconstruction of gendered subjects, involving labour, power and emotion. Hart argues:

- (i) masculinity is a crucial though untheorized component of class;
- (ii) the social processes that create and sustain gender inequality have been a submerged though crucial foundation of class formation (1989:21).

NOTES

1. The papers of the Malibongwe Conference form part of the Malibongwe Collection. The Collection also includes papers from African National Congress In-House Seminars in 1989. This Collection is available at the African Studies Division, Jagger Library, University of Cape Town.
2. This paper is a co-operative academic effort which evolved through collective discussion, individual writing and collective rewriting. The gains were individual and an enriched text but at the expense of total consistency.
3. We are indebted to Glynnda Volbrecht's critique of our paper and in particular for sharing her understanding of both the tradition of a gender-free analysis and the androcentric legacy that marks South African scholarship.
4. This is comparable to the mobilisation of Afrikaner rural women which led to their defection from the South African Party/United Party in the 1930s. The SAP/UP refused to incorporate men and women in a single branch structure. They precluded women from the business of politics as the women's structures had to fulfil the political role as domestic (teamaker, cakebaker and fundraiser) and had little decision-making powers. This was cited most frequently as the cause of women's defection to the National Party. Despite the detailed documentation of Afrikaner history and their tribute to Afrikaner women it is always within the construction of Afrikaner women as mothers and wives. The defection of Afrikaner women is discussed in private correspondence between the SAP/UP Cape Provincial organising secretary and the party provincial leader.
5. For example, South African National Students' Congress (SANSCO), University of Cape Town,

elected a man to the position of women's organiser. This situation arises out of a complex interaction of past political analysis, past political practices and the current importance of organising women.

6. A 'gender regime' refers to the operation and articulation of gender relations within a given institution (Connell, 1987:120).

7. Throughout the Malibongwe Conference Papers the underlying assumption is that the initiation of the nuclear family through marriage is based upon a heterosexual relationship between the partners. A most notable omission in the papers is the 'silence' attended to homosexual relationships.

8. In a less refined formulation, it has been argued that the conflict 'does not lie between men and women but between women and social order ...' (Border Region, 1990:5). Authors' note: unacknowledged quotation from Samora Machel quoted below.

9. See Clara (1989) - 'Feminism and the struggle for national liberation'; and Border Region (1990) - 'Cultural and Traditional Practices and How They Retard or Enhance Women's Emancipation and Participation in the Development of South Africa'.

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