

# Women's rights: does the government really care?

**Mavivi Manzini explains why women should get suspicious when the NP government starts claiming to support equality for women**

**T**he NP government has recently introduced three draft Bills dealing with women's rights. The aim, they say, is to:

- end discrimination against women
- promote equal opportunities
- end violence against women

For more than 40 years, the NP government treated black women as "surplus people" who could be forcibly removed and dumped in rural slums created by apartheid. Now, all of a sudden, the NP is

pretending to be a champion of women's rights. The Nats, I don't believe, have suddenly changed.

The government and the NP were against setting up the Gender Advisory Committee (GAC) at Codesa. The aim of the GAC was to ensure that women's rights were taken into account during negotiations.

Why are these Bills being introduced now? Is it not a trick to win the women's vote in the coming elections?

The government did not

consult with women before introducing these Bills. It is ignoring the Women's Charter Campaign which is collecting women's demands (see opposite page).

These Bills do not go nearly far enough to ensure women's equality. For example, they do not make maternity leave compulsory.

They do not deal with discrimination against women in taxation, medical and pension schemes or subsidies for married women. Women married under customary law will remain minors. The Bills are also silent on the issue of race.

All laws which discriminate on the basis of race or gender should be removed at one go during the transitional period. It does not make sense to change a few of these discriminatory laws while ignoring others.

Women demand far more than these Bills offer - we want real change in the lives of the majority of women. ☺

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From: League of Kenyan Women Voters Handbook