

and newspapers. Sometimes women were shown as sexy pinups. Women were not shown as people fighting their own struggles. Women have been able to change this in some unions.

Let us make our voices heard

Women workers in Britain took up the fight to get more women involved in trade unions. They were able to change some things to suit women better. And they were able to get more women to be actively involved in trade unions. Their battle is not over. They have to keep on fighting to keep what they have won. And there are new battles every day to make sure that women's voices do get heard. But what the women in Britain are doing is a lesson for women everywhere.

We can learn from the struggles of women in Britain. We can make sure that women's voices are heard in our unions, in our townships and in our country.

This article was written for SPEAK by LACOM, Johannesburg, from a LACOM booklet "The Women's Struggle for Participation in trade unions in Britain". You can order the booklet from LACOM, SACHED TRUST, Union Centre, 31 Pritchard Street, Johannesburg.



Drawing by Gili Bond. Jajta coras, Harare, Zimbabwe

A WOMAN'S PLACE IS IN THE STRUGGLE

WE ARE BREAKING THE SILENCE

Going around with SPEAK number 19 was much more interesting than usual. Just about everyone we met had something to say about the article on women beating. Some only saw the writing on the cover which said -"BREAKING THE SILENCE - Women Say Our Men Must Stop Beating Us". And this was enough to get them talking! We were pleased. Because we want people to discuss these things. We really want to break the silence.

Some liked the article very much. They said, "It is very clearly written". "It tells exactly what women go through". "It is very strong and has ideas of what women can do". "It's a wonderful article".

But there were those who could not believe we were writing about such things. And these were mostly men. One man asked, "What are you saying? I have seen so many women beating men and you say nothing about that".

Another man said, "These things should be discussed in the bedroom."

Another said, "I don't believe it but you are asking women to form vigilante groups."

Talking about women beating

We decided to find out what others thought about men beating their wives and girlfriends. Some students helped us. They took copies of SPEAK 19 to some men and women. They asked them to read the article.

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BREAKING THE SILENCE

WOMEN SAY OUR MEN MUST STOP BEATING US

And then they went back for a chat. Only two of the people they spoke to said that men should beat their wives or girlfriends. These two felt that it was important that men showed who was the boss in the home. And they believed it was tradition for men to show women their strength.

Women beating must stop

But most of the people we talked to said it was wrong for men to beat women. And they wanted to see a stop to this.

One young man said, "What you are asking me, sister, of this article, is like asking if I agree that my mother should be beaten up by my father, which he did. All this never made sense to me. My mother is not a child. My dad beat her up for things like not being

home by 6p.m. This stopped the day my two brothers and I dealt with my father man to man."

Another man who is a teacher and 45 years old, said, "It is true that it happens worldwide that women are beaten and even killed by their husbands. Only women can come together and fight this, because they feel the pinch." This man had beaten his wife two weeks ago. He said he will stop and he took the SPEAK magazine for his wife to read.

One woman thought it was not right. But she also saw this as part of life. She said. "My child this is normal in our lives. Though I am one of the lucky few. I have always been respected by my husband. In our society it is a shame to think of separating from your husband. People seem to think there was something wrong with a woman rather than with the husband. That is why most of us stood it."

Another woman said, "It is high time women must fight for their rights. If two people do not agree they must talk together. There is no need for beatings"

Let us fight to break the silence

It was good that people were willing to talk about this and that most wanted things to change. It is good that women in COSATU are talking about this problem of women beating.

Lets fight together to break the silence. Let us take these problems out of the bedroom so that we can work for a world where women are respected.



IT'S A STRANGE WORLD, ISN'T IT?

Drawing by SPEAK