

GENDER, POLITICS AND TRADE UNIONS

Introduction

This paper is written to reflect on the political theory that dominates the progressive labour movement in South Africa and to reflect on ways of deepening gender consciousness within the labour movement. The purpose of the paper is to explore our theoretical approach to understanding women's oppression and unequal gender relations. In addition the paper will also reflect on building a gender conscious cadreship. It will conclude by proposing recommendations for advancing the struggle for the emancipation of women and gender equality in trade unions and in society.

The sections of the paper are as follows:

1. The origins of women's oppression
2. Capitalism, racism and patriarchy in South Africa
3. Unpaid reproductive labour and household power relations
4. Gender and waged labour
5. Lessons from socialist experiences of challenging gender inequality and women's oppression
6. Key contradictions and challenges in trade union gender struggles
7. Developing gender conscious cadreship and spaces for women's activism
8. Action for change

The Origins of Women's Oppression

This paper takes on board Engels (1884) and later Reed's (1979) theory that early (pre-class) communal societies were in fact matriarchal societies. In summary, both Engels and Reed argue that the evolution of society was characterised by a decline from matriarchal societies where ownership was communal and production processes were quite simple. During this time women's subsistence and reproductive labour were a source of livelihood and power. As the new societies evolved they were characterised by: the emergence of classes and private property, and later the location of power in the state. This was made possible by the new and complex modes of production which allowed for the production of more surplus and the appropriation of this surplus by a new emerging class of men who (because of their position as traders) managed to usurp the surplus for themselves and thus introduced private property. The institution of marriage was introduced at this time to regulate who is a legitimate heir to the accumulated private property.

Once private property, marriage and the patriarchal family was established, there emerged sexism alongside racism and class inequalities and other forms of discrimination and subjugation.

The important point is that patriarchy and women's oppression are not natural, but socially created and bound up with the emergence of class societies and private property.

Capitalism, Racism and Patriarchy in South Africa

South Africa is a capitalist society with a capitalist economic system. The systems of capitalism, racism and patriarchy are *mutually reinforcing*. Capitalism is characterised by huge societal inequality which arises from the fact that the capitalist class owns all the factories, energy sources, resources, etc. on which everyone depends in order to live. In this scenario every person is held to ransom by the capitalist class which has appropriated the earth's resources as private property. The working class is the class that is compelled to sell their labour to survive, under conditions and wages set by the capitalists. Capitalists make profits by paying workers less than the value of what they produce so the relationship is one of exploitation and class struggle. The system of capitalism is maintained by force (through organised violence of the state – for example, the police, jails, army). It is only by creating a new economic and social alternative to capitalism that the working class can free itself and the whole of society. This struggle for an alternative society must also lead to an overhaul of the oppressive gender relations within our society.

The COSATU National Gender Committee Discussion Paper on *Gender: A Struggle within the Struggle (2001)* discussed how Apartheid capitalism entrenched and deepened patriarchy in South Africa:

The colonial system in South Africa, as throughout the continent, intensified the gender oppression found in pre-colonial systems. The combination of colonial and customary oppression denied women basic social and economic rights in the family and the community. Many women were barred from living in cities, owning land, family planning, inheriting, borrowing money or participating in political and social struggles. The system led to widespread abuse of women, both inside and outside the family. African women were confronted by triple oppression – oppression on the basis of their race, gender and class.

Apartheid laws set out limited and impoverished roles for African women. In particular, as they enforced migrant labour, they defined the role of African women in society and the economy. Restrictions were placed on women working and living in urban areas through pass laws. Black working class women bore the brunt of apartheid, capitalist and patriarchal oppression. Apartheid capitalism also benefited from women's oppression in that large numbers of African women worked as domestic workers and cleaners under extremely exploitative conditions. Furthermore, women's unpaid labour in the rural areas enabled bosses to pay extremely low wages to migrant workers.

“The following quote from an SACP 10th Congress (1998) document demonstrates how the capitalist system benefited from and reproduced patriarchal relations in South Africa:

“...the specific capitalist growth path in our country involved the appropriation of existing patriarchal customs and traditions, and their articulation into the reproduction of the capitalist system. This articulation saw the vast exacerbation of the coercive features of pre-existing patriarchy. In particular, the brunt of the reproduction of a massive army of reserve cheap labour was borne by the unpaid (and hidden) labour and effort of millions of women. The reproduction functions often carried (at least to some extent) by society at large in other developed economies (by way of pensions, public education, health-care and housing, and municipal water and power infrastructure) has been borne, at huge personal cost, by millions of black women in our country.”

South African Communist Party (SACP), 1998

Women in all societies do not enjoy genuine and substantive equality with men. In fact all human societies across the globe are characterised by inequality between men and women. This oppression of women includes the following features:

- Subordination of women to male authority, in the family and the community
- Limited decision making power
- Limitations on mobility
- Objectification of women as a form of property
- Violence, rape and the threat of violence
- Sexual division of labour in which women are confined to:
 - child rearing and personal services for adult males in the household
 - Specific types of wage work related to the household role (cleaning, domestic work) low in status and pay

(Orr, Presentation to Gauteng Political School, 2011)

In the South African context, women’s position in society remains appallingly low for the following reasons:

Women continue to experience a disproportionate amount of gender based violence (GBV) in the form of rape, assault and femicide. Whilst this may be attributed to South Africa’s violent past, it is clear that more urgent action needs to be taken to protect women and children from it. According to an ISS report (2011):

“On average seven women were murdered every day in South Africa between March 2010 and March 2011, according to the police crime statistics released in September 2011. At least half of these murders will have been at the hands of intimate partners. During that same period the police recorded 89 956 cases of common assault against women (247 cases a day) and 56 272 cases of rape (154 a day).

... Recent research by the Medical Research Council and Genderlinks shows that more than half of the women in Gauteng have experienced some sort of violence at the hands of their intimate partners and about 80% of men disclose having perpetrated such violence.”

The poor provision of health facilities and services means that women's health needs are not adequately accommodated; but also it means that the burden of caring for the sick and dying in households across the nation, often falls to women.

The high illiteracy rates which result from apartheid era planning also mean that the majority of those who are illiterate are women. In addition the low education levels of women mean that they are unemployable more often than their male counterparts. This, therefore, affects their livelihoods.

Unpaid Reproductive Labour and Household power relations

Every day workers return to the workplace fit to work – they are rested, fed, clothed and nurtured. Whose labour is this? This is the hidden household labour (mostly of women) which enables capitalists to pay lower wages and maximise profits. Unpaid reproductive labour is largely invisible, unrecognised and not counted, and yet it contributes significantly to the economy, society and families.

Unpaid reproductive labour has a strong class and racial dimension. Reproductive labour is not the same in a Sandton household as it is in Khayelitsha, for instance. In Sandton, the domestic worker takes care of the children, walks the dogs, operates the washing machine and vacuum cleaner. While in Alexandra and Khayelitsha the mothers and daughters of the household sweep, clean, cook and care for children, the sick and the elderly.

In a patriarchal society, women are also expected to take care of the needs of their partners and husbands.

As if women's challenges in the labour market were not enough, the majority of women, especially black women, still have to juggle paid employment and unpaid reproductive labour or domestic chores such as cooking and taking care of children. The shortage and/ or inadequacy of childcare facilities in our communities and the sexual division of labour in the home as well exacerbates the pressure that is put to bear on women. Maternity leave is not universal and pay provision for maternity leave is also inadequate in most cases, whilst in some cases even the legislated time frame is not complied with.

Lenin saw the family as an instrument of control and oppression of women and he condemned it as 'domestic slavery' and 'humiliating subjugation' of women in the household. He had the following to say about reproductive labour:

"Notwithstanding all the laws emancipating woman, she continues to be a domestic slave, because petty housework crushes, strangles, stultifies and degrades her, chains her to the kitchen and the nursery..." (Lenin, 1919)

In almost all households whether capitalist or socialist, women continue to experience unequal power relations. The socialisation process of children includes

the internalisation of conservative gender roles in the family. In capitalist societies the children also learn from an early age to conform to capitalism.

The family becomes a shock absorber of the oppressive society, where people experience inequality, poverty and discrimination resulting in domestic violence, child abuse and negative family experiences. In capitalist society especially, nuclear families become isolated and reduced to mere units of consumption for the ever-burgeoning capitalist industry.

Women still remain in gender-stereotyped jobs that are low-paid and under-skilled, like cleaning and retail. The type of paid work where women predominate is closely related to the household division of labour.

Gender and waged labour

In South Africa the labour market is still divided in terms of race and gender, with an unequal sexual division of labour. In this gendered labour market, women are largely associated with subservience, tasks associated with domesticity, serving and servicing. Men, on the other hand are seen as more suited to jobs which include the handling of machinery and technology. Labour market segmentation refers to different types of jobs in different industries with different levels of income, security, status and levels of organisation. In South Africa this is closely related to race, class and gender (COSATU Gender Policy, 2000).

These jobs are also valued differently in terms of the remuneration of both men and women with men taking a larger chunk of income. The ILO, "Global Employment Trends" (2004:3) indicates that, *"Women have a smaller likelihood of being in regular wage and salaried employment than men. Also, the female share of contributing family workers exceeds the male rate in almost all economies where data are available. In economies with a high share of agriculture, women work more often in this sector than men. Women's share of employment in the services sector also exceeds that of men. Additionally, women are more likely to earn less than men for the same type of work, even in traditionally female occupations."*

In South Africa there have been massive job losses in sectors where women predominate (retail, clothing and textiles), and in industries where women are heavily reliant on benefitting from remittances (mining and construction). At the same time there is an increase in casualisation & labour flexibility to the benefit of employers. This tends to affect women more. As the research into labour broking in Grabouw by the CLRS indicates, "While there has been an increase in the employment of women, the jobs available to them are poor quality and insecure, which makes women more vulnerable to exploitation. While agricultural production offers women the opportunity to enter into paid employment, casual employment does not allow women to access benefits and minimum wages." ¹

¹ Centre for Rural Legal Studies (CRLS), "Going for Broke: A Case Study of Labour Brokerage on Fruit Farms in Grabouw" (2009)

Privatisation and public sector cutbacks represent yet other threats to gender equality in terms of women's employment and the *increase* of the burden of unpaid labour that is undertaken by women, by shifting the provision of social services and basic needs from the state to women. In the South African context class, race and gender are mutually determining, subjecting black women in particular to the most severe forms of hardship and exploitation.

Lessons from Socialist Experiences of Challenging Gender Inequality and Women's Oppression

The fortunes of women in socialist countries have been uneven between countries and uneven during different epochs within the same countries, indicating that a socialist overthrow of capitalism does not guarantee women their rights. In fact, these experiences underline the need to undertake a conscious struggle to transform gender relations, rather than assuming that this will automatically be solved as part of the class struggle.

In Communist USSR, for example, women did have more freedom than their Western counterparts in terms of access to free health care and education and access to employment in occupations that were considered traditional 'men's jobs'. In 1918, during Lenin's time the Bolshevik Code on Marriage and the Family Code was introduced. This granted women the right to divorce, without the bureaucratic processes that accompany divorce proceedings in Western countries till today. In addition to this women could have all possible fathers contributing to a child's upbringing in the days when there were no DNA tests to establish paternity. This reflected quite a radical stance on ensuring that men take parental responsibility.

Some of these gains were eroded when Stalin came into power. His argument was that the plan of rapidly industrialising the Soviet Union required stable families and rapid reproduction of the workforce. The Family Code introduced by the Bolsheviks had also legalised abortion and homosexuality in addition to making divorce easier. Under Stalin a propaganda campaign was introduced which appealed to the soviets for social stability, conservative family values and the 'glory of worker motherhood'.

In this context women's organisation was viewed as unpatriotic. In the Soviet Union of Stalin, therefore, massive gains for women and progress towards gender equality were usurped for 'the greater good'. This bears relevance today, for example, to what extent do we utilise "the greater good" debate to suppress women's emancipation and gender equality?²

The recognition of reproductive labour, however, was maintained in the USSR in the form of public child-care facilities, public kitchen and laundry facilities. This was an extremely important part of ensuring that reproductive labour became a social responsibility rather than falling on the shoulders of women. Nevertheless, even with

² Nzimande, F "Women emancipation and gender equality- points to ponder in the 21st century" 2012

these provisions, women still remained disproportionately responsible for child-rearing activities.

Education, as mentioned above, was used to facilitate women's entry into waged work as well as other policies such as equal pay and equality in the workplace. Even with these advances, women still had a burden of fulfilling multiple roles. They were defined as workers and mothers, while men were defined solely as workers.³

In China there were interesting contradictions that related to economic requirements and demand for labour, and to shifts in ideology. The Chinese also reversed some of their gains, introducing slogans such as "Housework is Glorious too" and "Let's be Pretty". A "positive" cult of the housewife was fostered and women were urged to seek fulfilment through raising a socialist family. Some socialist ideologues denied the fact that men benefit from women's oppression and play a role in perpetuating it.⁴

Thomas Sankara, an African revolutionary and President of Burkina Faso challenged this idea in a Woman's Day speech: *"Comrades, only the revolutionary transformation of society can create conditions for your liberation. You are dominated by both imperialism and men. In every male languishes the soul of a feudal lord, a male chauvinist, which must be destroyed. This is why you must eagerly embrace the most advanced revolutionary slogans to make your liberation real and advance toward it more rapidly."* (1987:29-30)

Sankara was also quoted as saying women hold up the other half of the sky. His achievements as an African President who led Burkina Faso include:

- The banning of female genital mutilation, forced marriages and polygamy
- Appointing women into high office within the government and the military
- Encouraging women to work outside the home
- Encouraging women to get an education even while they are pregnant
- Promoting contraception
- Challenging stereotypes by encouraging men to do work that is considered to be 'women's work' such as going to market and cooking
- Recognising AIDS as a major threat to Africa and her development⁵

These three short cases indicate clearly that socialist countries made tremendous strides on gender equality, especially regarding socialising reproductive activities, education and development and drawing women into waged work. They also indicate that class struggle will not automatically resolve women's oppression.

There is a need for conscious gender struggles by women and gender activists. The struggle to transform interpersonal, gender power relations between women and

³ Orr, Socialism and Gender- presentation to COSATU Gauteng November 2011

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ www.wikipedia.com , 22 Feb 2012

men must still be addressed even post socialism and/or as part of a socialist struggle. The phrase “*The personal is political*” which became a rallying cry of feminists in the 1970’s therefore becomes relevant even within a socialist context. This indicates that women must of necessity organise themselves to struggle against patriarchy. They cannot rely on state interventions alone to ensure that their burden is lightened or removed.

Key contradictions and challenges in trade union gender struggles⁶

The gender struggle within trade unions is “a struggle within the struggle”. It is therefore characterised by advances and setbacks, struggles and silences, activism and suppression.

COSATU as a federation has committed itself to advancing gender equality and it has made progress in developing policies to address this, however the implementation of these policies is dismally weak. The numbers of women in leadership have increased, but at a very slow rate. Campaigns and programmes of the federation have not adequately addressed the crisis of the living conditions and experiences of South African working class women.

COSATU adopted a comprehensive Gender Policy in 2000, which was a collation of existing resolutions taken by the Federation since its launch in 1985. Important progress has been made by the federation in the development of policies and resolutions to advance gender equality. However, Congress after Congress has been presented with Secretariat Reports lamenting the lack of progress on gender issues and the lack of implementation of resolutions. Despite the very public and open acknowledgement of this failure, very little has been done to address this state of affairs.

Gendered change in organisations is difficult because it requires that women and men, and unions as a whole undo and unlearn practices and values that have become entrenched. Without attention to this level of change, resolutions are bound to fail. In fact, one of the weaknesses of the approach to gender issues is the tendency to focus more on policy and resolutions than on action and struggles around implementation. A delegate to the COSATU Gender Conference in 2009 referred to this as “*resolutionary politics*”. There is an assumption that getting the policy right is more than half the battle and beyond that implementation should be a mere formality – but the reality is in fact the opposite. Implementation is often where the struggle begins. This is precisely because this is a struggle that is fundamentally about challenging power relations in organisations and in society (NALEDI, 2006:144).

COSATU remains a male dominated trade union federation, both in terms of gender representation in leadership as well as in the approaches, attitudes and beliefs of its leadership. While many leaders have learnt to speak the language of gender

⁶ This section is extracted from a NALEDI report produced for the ALRN (African Labour Research Network) on Gender and Trade Unions published in 2010.

equality, in reality they continue to hold extremely conservative ideas on gender relations. The conduct of many leaders in relation to women on a personal and political level is more often than not sexist and patriarchal in nature. Of course, trade unions and their leaders are products of this society, and patriarchal ideas and systems continue to dominate all over the world. However, trade unions, particularly those in the COSATU-fold, have made an explicit commitment to transforming and challenging oppressive relations in society. Therefore they must begin to operate as agents of change rather than as perpetuators of unequal gender relations.

One of the key problems in COSATU is the bureaucratisation of gender. Important struggles become trapped in paper work and processes and thus lose their vibrance, dynamism and ability to mobilise. But also, these struggles are taken forward within male-dominated union structures. Often, in such male-dominated union environments, male leaders who are resistant to taking forward gender struggles learn to use “*gender-speak*” to prevent real change (NALEDI, 2006:145). Leaders are aware of what words and jargon to use, but they often resist taking any action, including resisting making union resources available for programmes and activities that advance gender equality.

Another problem that has emerged is that the concept of gender is often misused in a way that undermines its potential for genuine change. For instance, unions may talk about gender in ways that portrays women and men as having equal problems and status as gendered beings, rather than acknowledging the unequal power position between them.

Unions have correctly identified the need to combine an approach which gives specific and focused attention to gender through separate budgets, structures and policies with an approach that ‘integrates’ and ‘mainstreams’ gender into the life of trade unions. These concepts are often misused, however. The following is an attempt to define a progressive approach towards mainstreaming gender:

“Mainstreaming is about women and gender at the centre, as part of the mainstream. The mainstream is where decisions are made and where power and control lies. This is largely dominated by men. Mainstreaming is about moving away from an approach that marginalises women. This means a shift away from seeing women as the problem (for example, seeing women as lacking skills, confidence and therefore requiring capacity so that they can be included). The new approach recognises that it is social systems and structures that create inequalities between women and men through inequalities in resources, power and decision-making and therefore there is a need to change this. The understanding is that it is unequal power relations between women and men that keeps women marginalised rather than blaming the capacity of women. Mainstreaming implies that the ‘mainstream’ itself must be challenged and changed. Mainstreaming is more than integration because it is not only about including women in existing projects and programmes, but about rethinking priorities and transforming how things are done. This means that mainstreaming is about re-evaluating

policies, structures and processes rather than only including women in them. The mainstreaming approach assumes that everything we do is influenced by the sexist, unequal, oppressive society we live in, and therefore all actions should be geared towards challenging this. Mainstreaming is a process rather than a goal.”⁷

A fundamental challenge for gender activists and trade union leaders is to address the patriarchal nature of our organisations. Trade unions remain male-dominated in culture, practices and leadership. As pointed out by one of the research participants in a study conducted by NALEDI: *“The advancement of the demand for increased representation of women in leadership without corresponding organisational change often leads to the inclusion of women in unchanged structures.”⁸*

Thus, while COSATU has developed a clear and comprehensive gender policy (which is a synthesis of the many good resolutions on gender since COSATU’s establishment) little has been achieved in practice in terms of translating policy into meaningful change.

Gender democracy is inextricably linked to worker control and democracy in unions. Engendering trade unions and organising can have a profound effect on union democracy and participation, as the following quote suggests: *“The active involvement of the whole membership is the only real source of strength any union can count on.”* (Gallin and Horn, 2005).

Developing a Conscious Cadreship

A key aspect of women’s oppression is the silencing of dissent. This is achieved through suppression and control. The key to challenging and fighting this is to develop a gender conscious cadreship. But cadreship alone is not enough, this must be linked to a programme of revolutionary action and campaigns. Consciousness is developed through engagement with theory and practice (activism).

Unfortunately the conceptualisation of (male) leadership around the development of “politically conscious cadres” is both gender-blind and in many instances blatantly sexist and patronising. It assumes that women are not politically conscious and at the same time it advocates “capacitating women” around political theory that itself is completely gender-blind but certainly not gender neutral. Thus, once again women are seen as “the problem”, where they are viewed as “lacking in skills and capacity” and needing to be “trained” so that they can be included in existing (unchanged) structures. This is problematic on two levels, it blames women for the fact that they have been excluded from leadership structures and political education programmes, whilst at the same time it proposes to “fix the problem” by training women to fit into the very same male-dominated and exclusive structures and programmes. (In other words ‘let’s train women to think, talk and act like male leaders’!)

⁷ *Labour Pains: Women’s leadership and gender strategies in COSATU* (2006:190), NALEDI.

⁸ NALEDI Report for ALRN on Gender and Trade Unions in South Africa (2010).

The focus should be on transforming the organisation and its approach to gender issues, rather than merely inserting women into male-dominated and oriented structures.

Another dimension to the challenge is that there is less and less attention being paid to the need to build gender conscious cadreship and activists. This is in a context where there is a low level of consciousness amongst women and men about what constitutes sexism and how to challenge it. Part of the problem is that sexist practices are 'naturalised' and therefore appear hidden. Thus, there are numerous workplace (and union) examples of sexism and gender discrimination that go unchallenged because they have been 'normalised'. For instance, women are expected to take responsibility for 'balancing' work and family life with no support from their partners, society or the employer and this goes unchallenged. Unequal pay between women and men remains rife because women and men's jobs are valued differently and this is largely not questioned.

This is also because sexism and gender stereotypes are deeply internalised. This leads to a sense of paralysis about changing oppressive practices because they are so deeply entrenched. The contradictions of unequal gender relations and women's oppression manifest in the economy, society and households, between bosses and workers, fathers and daughters, husbands and wives, comrades and friends.

The COSATU National Gender Committee Discussion Paper on *Gender: A Struggle within the Struggle (2001)* highlighted the importance of: "... the need to tackle gender relations at the personal level. Fundamental to this challenge is the transformation of individuals to become conscious gender activists. This means that men must begin to internalise their commitment to gender equality – starting in their own lives. It also means that women must refuse to be bullied and harassed by men, and that they must act on the power that they already have."

The point that is made here is that women have the power to act even where they are excluded from decision-making and leadership structures. They also have the power to organise to challenge their oppression.

A key challenge in developing conscious cadres is to provide and create space for women's activism and independent initiatives. Without this space, women and gender activists remain trapped in bureaucracy dominated by hierarchical structures which exclude them. We need to look at the issues of autonomy and leadership when organising women workers:

"When women workers organise, the issues of autonomy and leadership are crucial. Autonomy... means... the acceptance of the necessary political space where independent and creative initiatives can develop, recognising the specific problems of women workers and focused on their needs and sensitivities.

The issue of leadership is linked to the issue of autonomy. Successful organising means that women must be led by women and that there must be an opportunity to create a trained cadre of women leaders.”⁹

The September Commission pointed to the decline in women’s activism, and that gender structures have become more bureaucratic and focused on reports and procedures, rather than dynamically leading campaigns and facilitating women’s activism.

Why is the voice of women workers largely silent in unions? And this is in a context where women’s oppression and unequal gender relations have worsened in many respects. For instance, it is disturbing to note that we have hardly advanced from the victories of the 1980s on maternity leave and pay. The campaign for childcare for workers is virtually invisible. Sexual harassment, sexual exploitation of workers and sexual violation of women in unions remains rife and in many instances is taken lightly by leadership.

In the context of such an onslaught against women workers, there is a need for a more concerted and conscious effort for women to stand together in solidarity. This requires spaces for women to join hands and support each other in shaking off the chains of oppression. Women’s structures were historically spaces for consciousness raising, strategising and campaigning around gender issues. Gender structures need to assert and claim this role and organise women and gender activists in the struggle for liberation.

Conclusion and Recommendations

In taking forward our gender struggles, there is a need for us to prioritise the following:

- **An integrated (mainstreamed) and focused approach to gender**
 - This means that gender must be an integral part of all our theory and struggles, and taken up in all trade union work
 - And integration or mainstreaming gender work means not merely including or adding-on but rethinking priorities, budgets and the ways in which we
 - At the same time we need to make focused and conscious efforts to advance gender struggles, (using gender departments, structures, budgets and campaigns)

- **Building conscious gender activists**
 - This means that we need to develop consciousness amongst women around sexism and create support and solidarity around challenging internalised oppression

⁹ Gallin and Horn (2005) *Organizing Informal Women workers*.

- Simultaneously, we need to work at eliminating conservative attitudes and resistance to change amongst men (including amongst leadership)
- Whilst women should lead gender struggles because of their position in patriarchal societies, men are important allies who are also deeply affected by sexism
- **Revolutionary action**
 - Changing gender relations is not only about changing attitudes, it is also about taking action for change
 - We must dismantle structural inequality and challenge the material basis of women's oppression under capitalism (the sexual division of labour and unpaid reproductive labour)
 - We must transform gender power relations in workplaces, trade unions, households and relationships
 - We must democratise the state and advance progressive policies that improve the lives of black working class women and counter neo-liberalism
- **Transformation of unequal gender relations in the workplace**
 - Trade unions must take up campaigns and struggles to challenge the burden of unpaid labour that falls on women (for example through the living wage campaign, wage demands, demands for child-care)
 - This also links to Campaigns on Parental Rights Campaigns and Work and family life (working hours, maternity and paternity leave and pay, transport)
 - The campaign for equal pay for work of equal value requires major awareness-raising and support
 - Sexual harassment remains rife and is only effectively addressed with greater awareness and mechanisms for reporting cases
- **Organising women workers**
 - There is a need to put the resources and person power into organising vulnerable workers and sectors where women predominate, this requires new and creative organising strategies, but more importantly it means listening to workers needs and demands.
- **Dynamic, campaigning gender structures within trade unions**
 - Building on the success of the campaigns and struggles waged in the 1980s around parental rights and sexual harassment, unions must take up concrete campaigns affecting women workers
 - These campaigns must be dynamic and visible, focusing on building collective struggles for common demands

- **Building a movement of working class women and socialist gender activists**
 - There is a need for a progressive voice of women workers and socialists advancing gender struggles
 - “Building the practices, processes and relations we want to see in our socialist future begins now, with how we relate to our union comrades – men and women – in the democratic structures of today’s unions.”¹⁰

COSATU’s slogan “*an injury to one is an injury to all*” is the most appropriate rallying call for women’s emancipation, gender equality and socialism.

¹⁰ NALEDI: *Labour Pains* (2006:212).

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