

MEMORANDUM

TO: Dullah Omar  
Brigitte Mabandla

FROM: Amy Biehl

DATE: 10 December 1992

RE: Proposals for Papers

The following is a proposal for a series of research papers that I would like to pursue over the next few months. Several ideas have emerged as a result of the research and networking I have done to this point. I have listed the paper topics in order of the priority I think should be given to each topic. I have assigned priority based on my perception of the need for research in these areas combined with my personal experience and expertise. In other words, I think I am in a better position to analyse political participation and election-oriented subjects given my previous experience than I am to undertake a feminist critique of the violence and peace structures, although I hope over time I will be able to address the latter as well.

In addition to producing these papers as academic documents, I would also like to produce a popular version of issue briefs related to each subject that could be used by a wider audience. If you think they are good enough, I hope we can consider translation into different languages as well. I had a very good meeting with Ilse Olckers, Head of the Gender Desk for Lawyers for Human Rights, who gave me useful input on these topics. I would like to know whether you think these topics will be useful to CLC, whether you agree with the priorities I have assigned, or whether the proposal is at all appropriate.

PROPOSED PAPER TOPICS

- I. Towards a Women's Package - Options for Structures and Mechanisms for Women in Democratic Government

Expected time to complete: Mid-January 1993

This topic has emerged out of the Durban conference sponsored by IDASA on a Women's Ministry. Cathi Albertyn has already done some work on this, but she thinks that it should be followed-up. In addition, the Western Cape Coalition has requested a similar workshop along the lines of the Durban workshop to educate its members. A paper outlining different options would be useful for this purpose. They have already done some research at CALS exploring different countries and I would like to follow-up on this.

My paper would highlight the benefits of a package of women's structures and mechanisms with multiple entry levels (e.g. national executive, regional, local, advisory bodies and extra-governmental structures) as opposed to a women's ministry in the traditional sense, which, to me, implies "ghettoisation" and bureaucracy. I think that most women who participated in the seminar share this belief and are interested in exploring different options. However, there is uncertainty as to what these options actually are and what has been tried

elsewhere. I would like to examine about three case studies, including Canada, Brazil, and an African country, although I am not certain which one yet, and draw from these experiences implications for South Africa. The paper would also explore the problems of linking these structures to the grassroots.

I would use Cathi Albertyn and CALS, NADEL and LHR (for a legal perspective), and hopefully some of Brigitte's contacts in Canada as resource persons for this paper. I would also distribute drafts of the paper to particular women who attended the workshop to get input, such as Frene Ginwala, Thengwiwe of the SACP, and Gill Noero.

## II. Strategies for Women in Planning for Elections

Estimated Completion Date: Mid-March 1992

This idea arises out of my interest and experience in this field and my perception that there is a gap here. Much of what emerged out of the Durban conference was a discussion of how to get women into positions of power -- parliament, regional and local structures, etc. Many women talk about the need for a strong women's movement to get women elected. However, as I understand it, in the systems being proposed, women can not vote for women as women, they must vote for political organisations. Therefore, the reality of the South African situation is that unless women get themselves on party lists in the PR system, they will have no voice, as women, in government.

I propose an examination of the experiences of women's movements in different countries -- I think Latin American and Islamic countries have relevant experience in this case -- of techniques women have used to mobilise each other to vote. Out of this analysis would emerge ideas both election strategies for women and ways to structure voter education programs around women. Some examples of things I would like to explore are: methods for getting women's issues into the platforms of political parties and holding those parties accountable to those platforms; ways in which women from different political organisations can support each other; mobilising techniques such as the "neighbor approach" where women gather others from their area to go to the polls together -- in many countries, they turn it into a sort of festival -- making arrangements for childcare, etc.; basic education around the political system that highlights the realities for women, but emphasises their strength as voters -- this is also important for men to hear so that they take women seriously; and ways in which NGO women can monitor gender in elections.

On the strategy side, I think that such a paper could outline different options for strategies that could be taken up by different political organisations, since different groups will surely require different approaches. If Mbali is interested, I would like to cooperate with her, as I understand she is doing some of this type of work.

## III. A Feminist Critique of the Violence in South Africa and the Failure of the Dispute Resolution and Monitoring Structures to Address Women

Estimated completion date: ?

I'm not at all sure I would be able to complete such a large task. However, I think this is a crucial element of addressing violence as it effects

women by assigning it the level of priority of the political violence in this country -- because violence against women is political and it is a result of apartheid. Much of this idea was fleshed out by Ilse Olckers, who is extremely concerned with the crisis proportions that violence against women has reached in terms of rape, battery, death by back street abortions, etc. She believes that the issue of violence against women has been diminished by the emphasis of "political violence" in this country and that women have a right to claim women's deaths as political deaths.

The paper would 1) attempt to draw links with the crisis of political violence and the crisis of violence against women because empirically, the women's crisis is of equal or greater magnitude (there is a lot of empirical evidence of this available). Furthermore these two issues are linked because of the psychological and economic impact of apartheid on society and the breakdown of the family unit. 2) The paper would examine the structures set up to deal with violence and the absence of women and women's issues in these structures. The three primary players in the dispute resolution committees are the police, the civics and business -- three of the most male dominated structures in South African society. The paper would recommend strategies for integrating women into these structures or reforming these structures altogether.

I would like to be able to complete at least some work on this topic and it is a theme that I would like to explore in my larger paper on my Fulbright experience. There is a women's criminology conference in Durban in February. Obviously Ilse would be an important resource person on this topic, as she has done a lot of thinking about it. I am interested in your thoughts on this idea because I think it is extremely interesting, although it might be a bit controversial.

#### ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:

I will continue to gather information and contacts for the inventory of women's organisations that Brigitte has asked me to do. I have gotten a pretty good start so far, although I need to update my lists.

One additional idea that I'm not sure I would be able to take up is the monitoring of the media with regard to women's issues because I think this needs a lot of work. If you think that such a study would be more important than any of the above topics, we could discuss that as well.

Please give me your thoughts and ideas.

cc: Bulelani Ngcuka