

Women's month tarnished by ANC Minister

End violence against women

Three days before South Africans celebrated National Women's Day, a video showing Deputy Minister of Higher Education, Mduzuzi Manana, physically assaulting a woman outside of a nightclub, went viral. Soon photos of the woman's scars and bruises as well as a recording of Manana admitting to the assault also became public. After overwhelming public pressure Manana was reportedly given the choice by President Zuma to resign or be dismissed. He chose to resign and was thanked by Zuma for his service. But he still retains his seat in parliament. The response by the ANC government was insufficient considering the crisis of gender-based violence in South Africa.

Ferron Pedro

National Committee

Male violence against women is a key feature of the patriarchy of class society, where men are encouraged to exercise power and authority over women. When this is challenged, men often use their physical strength to punish women and control their behaviour. Manana's attempt at explaining his behaviour shows this clearly when he says, "Regardless of the extreme provocation, I should have exercised restraint. That shameful incident should not have happened ... As a leader, I should have known better and acted better." Manana tries to justify his behaviour by saying that the woman he assaulted was provoking him and that it was difficult for him not to retaliate in a violent manner.

For Manana, he clearly feels it is natural to 'punish' women using his physical strength. As a 'leader', he made a mistake by not 'exercising restraint'. The ANC leadership have consistently failed to challenge such patriarchal views.

Besides the controversial allegations of rape against Jacob Zuma, for which he has been acquitted, he has encouraged a culture of sexism in the ANC and in the country with sexist statements. He has said,

"When men compliment you innocently, you say it's harassment," downplaying the real issue of sexual harassment women face daily and saying that women should be complimented by unwanted attention. He has also said that unmarried women are a problem in society and that, "Kids are important to a woman because they actually give an extra training to a woman, to be a mother," giving no thought to a woman's freedom to choose whether she wants to be married or have children. He was reprimanded for this statement by the Commission of Gender Equality.

The lack of leadership with regard to women's freedoms is tragic because South Africa is a patriarchal society that faces a serious crisis of violence against women. According to a recent study by StatsSA and the MRC, 1 in 5 women, over the ages of 18, report they have experienced physical violence at the hands of their partner. The Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation reports that three women die at the hands of their intimate partner every day.

Violence against women is an extreme expression of the kind of sexism expressed by Jacob Zuma and other leaders in the ANC. Women face oppression in the workplace, with higher rates of unemployment as well as lower wages than men. Women face oppression at home with the bulk of unpaid household work falling on women's shoulders, whether they work outside the home or not. Women face oppression in society as a whole, often seen as existing only to fulfil whatever role men want them to fulfil and are pressured to depend on men and follow their lead.

But this is not a 'natural' way for men and women to be. It is only as a result of class society that women came to be seen as inferior to men and dependent on men. It is our task to build a new kind of society where we can overcome the inequality between men and women encouraged by capitalist society. Unity of working class men and women and all oppressed groups is the only route towards a socialist society creating the conditions to end women's oppression once and for all!

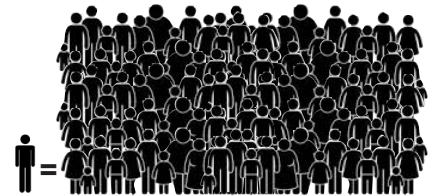
Them...

This year...

- The President had a pay rise of R114,994 per year to R2,989,845
- Ministers' had a pay rise of R92,371 per year to R2,401,633
- MPs' had a pay rise of R46,505 per year to R1,079,943

30.4 million people (55.5% of all South Africans) live in poverty on less than R992 each per month.

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