

No Child's Play: In Prison Under Apartheid, Caesarina Kona Makhoere, The Women's Press, London (121pp, price not known).

This slim, accessible volume describes the author's experience during six years in detention in South Africa, on charges under the Terrorism Act. She was arrested and detained in October 1976 for involvement in the Bantu education riots (that were met with the Sharpsville Massacre), her whereabouts having been disclosed by her policeman father. She was only convicted a year later, and then given a five year sentence. She was released in October 1982, aged 27, having been in solitary confinement in various jails for almost her entire sentence.

The book is written in a very immediate, informal style, expressing from the heart, the anger, frustration, commitment and courage of this powerful woman. She describes day to day life in various jails, and the continuing battle to improve conditions - with many successes over the years, because of her relentless determination. Despite the harshness of the conditions she maintains her objectivity and even a sense of humour, allied to a sharp sense of irony and justice.

It is the descriptive detail that brings her experiences alive - such as the time a letter to a cousin was rejected on the grounds she had quoted the Bible, the only book to which she had been allowed access for two years. The sheer pettiness of the prison system is amply illustrated, quite apart from the generally inhuman conditions, and, of course, the underlying injustice of an elaborate apartheid system even within prison walls.

For anyone concerned to learn more of the daily reality of political imprisonment in South Africa, Cde Makhoere's book provides a graphic, disturbing and inspiring personal account.

Reviewed by Helen Jackson, School of Social Work, Harare.

Women Race and Class, Angela Davis, The Women's Press, London, 1981 (271pp, price not stated).

One of the frequently heard statements in our lives today is 'this is the status of women in such and such a country', as if women in that country live a uniform life and they have the same concerns. For those with this false notion that one can talk about women as one group Angela Davis' book is the book to read. **Women Race and Class** is a journey through the history of American women: black, white, poor, rich, and other groups. Davis shows that even in their struggles for equality women in America were not united. Middle class white women had their own concerns which were different from those of working class whites and from black women.

Says Davis, white middle class women "viewed male supremacy as an immoral flaw in their otherwise acceptable society". For them, being franchised was the only issue. Thus, in the very beginning of the franchise movement both black women and working class white women were not involved. Davis shows that it was only after working class women realised that getting the vote would also enable them to fight for better working conditions that they took up the franchise issue.

Although Davis does not push Marxist rhetoric she analyses the women's struggle in Marxian terms. The alliance between race and class and its relationship to the capitalist system is clearly explained. Early feminists, who were not really economically disadvantaged, only analysed issues in the narrow perspective of men versus women. For working class women, economic conditions were the issues that they were fighting on. Women in the Socialist movement also saw beyond the race and sex issue, and took up the working women's cause, ie both black and white working women.

Davis also analyses the issue of rape in a new way, to show how the capitalist system has made the problem of rape worse, and how sometimes it may lead to it. During the slavery era white men raped their black slaves, not because of lust but "as a weapon of domination, a weapon of repression". Again Davis refutes one of the myths about rape, that it is committed by lascivious men. She shows that rape is used as a way of dominating by those who feel they have the power to dominate. Davis shows that black men, and other working class men in America, can rape women just as privileged men can, but (p200):

"since they (the disadvantaged classes) do not possess the social or economic authority... guaranteeing them immunity from prosecution, the incentive (to rape) is not nearly as powerful as it is for the men of the capitalist class".

Davis goes on to say

"The class structure of capitalism encourages men who wield power in the economic and political realm to become agents of sexual exploitation".

The full import of what Davis says is not difficult for people in the Third World to grasp. Women are at the bottom of the pile in economic and social terms, and rape and the sexual harassment of women are daily occurrences.

The most vivid parts of **Women Race and Class** are those dealing with the struggles of black women. Unlike other books that have been written about women under slavery, Davis' book does not dwell on the 'sexual role' of these women. In fact Davis shows that, unlike their white counterparts, black women have been taking part in the making of American history in their own name. Black women have always had to work outside the home and this gave them a measure of equality with their men. They fought side by side with their men against slavery:

"If black women bore the terrible burden of equality in oppression, ... they also asserted their equality aggressively in challenging the inhuman institution of slavery".

The Harriet Tubmans of American history made their mark in their own names, not just as wives of great men.

Davis goes on to show, however, that even though black women had a measure of equality with their men, they still suffered sex discrimination. Black women suffer the double burden of working outside the home and having to come home and do all the work. The important theme of this book is that while women's struggles are the same to a certain extent, the issues they grapple with in their day to day lives are quite different. Thus their responses are different. In this respect race and class play an important role. The temptation of talking about 'women' as some kind of homogeneous unit must be resisted.

This is a very vivid and powerful analysis of women's struggles in a so called 'First World' country, and is a must for all feminists and women-in-development analysts.

Reviewed by Everjoice J Win, Women's Action Group, Harare.