



EFF STATEMENT ON INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

Tuesday, 8 March 2022

The EFF commemorates International Women's Day, a concept which was proposed in 1910 on the background of valiant struggles waged on by millions of women over generations. A few years earlier, over 15 000 women had marched through the streets of New York, demanding shorter working hours, so that they could take care of their families, and demanding equal pay for equal work.

There is no denying that much work on women's liberation has been done by women from the West, however, one of the greatest tales often told on this day, is that of women's leadership and how it started in the West and somehow made its way to Africa.

International Women's Day therefore provides an opportunity to highlight some of these untruths, for we have to challenge how histories are written and retold.

In Africa, women have for over half a century, always had their own demands and understandings of women's rights. African women have always exerted leadership, in the home, society and in politics. Through our grandmothers ooMakhulu, our aunts oo ragadi, OoMakhadzi we have shaped our foundations of women leadership.

Ideals of women empowerment and opposing patriarchy, are therefore concepts which are not foreign to Africa.

In Africa, where some of the oldest civilizations in the world exists, women have always found ways of opposing patriarchy. In the early twentieth century, women such as Charlotte Maxeke founded the Bantu Women's League in 1918. While freedom fighters such as Lilian Ngoyi, Albertina Sisulu, Winnie Madikizela-Mandela and many others, fought long and tirelessly against colonialism as well as patriarchy.

Women are the experts of their own life stories and have for decades, been aware of the peculiarity of the struggles faced by women in general, and of working women in particular.

South Africa alone has a rich history of women leadership in history, yet it is often not commemorated in our contemporary political culture.

Today, these ideals remain relevant in our own society because the struggle for the emancipation of women has not changed much. Women, activists, artists and politicians stand at the forefront of the struggle using activism, knowledge and creativity to change situations that affect women negatively. For it is only African women who bear the responsibility of protecting the histories of African women and to connect them to the situations of today.

Today in South Africa, more than half of our population is female, and almost 40% of all households in the country are headed by women, who are responsible to the well-being of their families and extended families.

Women are at the coalface of poverty, they suffer the most from crime, scorned the most in public institutions and almost always get the short end of the stick when it comes to access to justice. It remains women who do not get paid equally for the same work done by their male counterparts.

All across the world, women continue to face a number of obstacles in leadership positions as we still live in a world where regardless of race, class or ethnicity women are still considered as outsiders whose lived experiences are minimally recognized, as women are still confined to domestic roles.

We know this to be true as our President, Cyril Ramaphosa and his backers, are doing all they can to circumvent the JSC process that recommended the appointment of a first female Chief Justice in the country. They do this because they cannot imagine an arm of the State as important as the judiciary that is led by a black female. For the opposition to the appointment of Judge President Mandisa Maya has nothing to do with her qualifications and skills, but everything to do with the fact that she is a black woman.

Women continue to be systemically marginalized both within our communities and at the workplace. Women are still viewed as being out of place in professional work environments

and are often subjected to subtle scrutiny at work than are men of the same rank. For power is still viewed as being masculine, with women are positioned as the weaker sex.

South Africa continues to have one of the largest income inequalities in the world, but the bleak picture for women does not end there.

Women continue to face a number of challenges in the new constitutional era, with violence being the most prominent. Violence is a prominent feature in the lives of South African women irrespective of numerous human rights efforts which have been passed by the government.

There still exists numerous hurdles for South African women to overcome in fighting for gender equality. And despite various challenges faced, growing numbers of women continue to break through the glass ceiling and enter into leadership positions.

As the EFF, we have since formation, consistently advance the cause of women emancipation. We have consistently called for land to be made available to women, particularly rural women, because they are the main drivers of sustainable change in communities.

We will continue the fight incessantly for the realization of these ideals and for a socialist society, because only under a socialist society would the emancipation of women be truly realized.

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