"YOU HAVE STRUCK A ROCK!"

FOOTAGE

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PHOTOGRAPH OF
WOMEN'S
DEMONSTRATION

IMAGE

PROTEST SONG: "Thina Silulatsha" (We are the young, we shall not be destroyed!)

SOUND

SUPERIMPOSE TITLE
YOU HAVE STRUCK
A ROCK!

FLORENCE MKIZE:

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SUBTITLES SUPER-
IMPOSED ON
PHOTOGRAPH

...that is why the organizations were all banned because there was no other two ways for the South African government to control the people during that time. There were a lot of people were banned, a lot of women were banned, a lot of women in jail - a lot of them!

NARRATOR

022

CU ON PASS

The Pass or Reference book is the means by which the white minority government controls our labour - and our lives. Every Black South African must carry one at all times.

FLORENCE MKIZE:

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FLORENCE MKIZE
ON CAMERA,
EXTERIOR

It's nothing to have identity but what is there in that reference book, some of the things are a disgrace to a person who makes a law of that kind! The main thing is the Influx Control which is the content of that reference book - that is one of the dirtiest things. Because the Influx Control deprives you to get a job to work for your family!
NARRATOR

In order to protect white status and wealth, a mass of influx control regulations have been designed to restrict the number of Blacks allowed to enter and work in the so-called "white" cities. This control is achieved by the Pass laws. The Pass also restricts us to particular areas and particular jobs. We are seen as a separate breed, without emotions, without desires to be with our families, to feed and clothe our own children... without rights to seek the work we wish to do or move about freely in the land of our birth.

MIGRANT LABOURER'S WIFE

Our husbands must leave to find work and stay away all year - sometimes many years. And we know why they want us to stay here: to keep a home for him and to keep a home for his children... because we have no rights for a place in the cities. I do not hear from my husband for months. The money has stopped coming. Even if I cry for it it does not come. My children are hungry - no food, no money. My neighbours lend me money to go to Cape Town to look for my husband. It is a long way.

NARRATOR

Although she has no Pass and risks arrest, it is a chance many women take in order to see their husbands.

TRAVELLING SONG
I am shown to the place where my husband lives. It is a men's hostel - a big grey building with many men, and also many women and children...

THOKO NTSHANGA

When women have got to come all the way from the Transkei to see their men, men there in the cities stay in hostels and they can't find any other accommodation for their wives, so they have to stay with them in the hostels. And what happens is that during the night when they sleep, there are police raids... they are arrested for being in the cities, for not having Passes, or not qualifying to be in that prescribed area.

CELINA

About 4 o'clock they wake them up ...
4 o'clock in the morning they catch them!
And the women they're screaming! They just pull them in the van, they take them to the jail.

NARRATOR

This has not always been the situation of women - our men have had to carry Passes since the 1890s, they were born into a life of raids and arrests, prison and labour camps... for being in the wrong place at the wrong time with the wrong papers!
But attempts to control the movement of women, the first as far back as 1913, met with such fierce resistance that each time Passes for women were withdrawn.

Black women suffer a double oppression. Our men are seen as units of labour, as appendages of the white economy, while we women are seen as appendages of men. Although black women serve on every farm and in every home, providing a huge indispensable and invisible labour force, the majority do not have passes to live in the "white"cities with their husbands.

The Nationalist government came to power in 1948. At this time, women feeling the threat to their families because of severe food and housing shortages, had begun to get together to deal with bread and butter issues...

Then the news leaked out that the government intended to introduce Passes for women.

FLORENCE MKIZE:
I used to go... soon as I go the women say: "Right, if you come and tell us about the Pass laws - we don't want Passes!" That's how we used to organise the women... we'd have a group of the women, until we'd have a huge number of women...

DORA TAMANA:
... because these Passes are sending them a lot to the jail and leave the children without care. The father will go to work and leave such a small little things alone. Who will do the washing for them? Who will save the little ones like these from all the troubles if the mother is not there?
You see Africans have experience of the Pass law. You think the man has gone to look for work... next thing you won't see the man coming back.

You go and look all over - hospitals, you go to the government mortuary, you go all over - you can't find the man. And you go to the Native Commissioner... they tell you the man is inside for the Pass offense!

All this was part of the life they lived. And they now found it being extended to themselves - and realized it would be very much worse if it was extended to themselves. Because it would be the mother who would be taken away from the child. What they saw was in fact what happened later...

"... why my mother's not coming back? Why my sister's not coming back?" Sister is arrested. You will hear that after three weeks. Sometimes you will hear how, when she is coming - because sometimes she will be sentenced for seven days and come back. "I come from jail!" Oh!"

Then the meeting was held in 1950. Now the women went there to protest against the Pass laws. We wanted the government to know that we don't want these Passes, we don't want these bondages... because the more we carry the more we are oppressed.
HELEN JOSEPH:
The White government always wanted complete control over the Black people - and I think as the process of urbanisation went on and more and more Blacks came to the towns, it must have been a festering sore ... the fact that Black women were free.

NARRATOR:
"Women of all races are invited to attend a conference to promote Women's Rights... It may be said that in the past women did not participate in government in their traditional societies, but those days are past! Women now have the same conditions to contend with as men, often doing the same work... (Fade)

DORA TAMANA:
We formed the Women's Federation in 1954 - to fight the education of our children, to fight the Pass laws... and to fight our men! Because the women are oppressed by the government and by their men... and we have to fight also that!

NARRATOR:
Dora Tamana became the First National Secretary of the Federation - until the government banned her and prohibited her from all political activity. Helen Joseph took over in 1955. It was the beginning of a dynamic and energetic partnership with Lilian Ngoyi as President...
Lilian Ngoyi was a dynamic leader... who could command whole audiences and get a tremendous emotional response from them. She was guided by her own emotions and her own anger at the injustices that she felt as a person she was experiencing... and that her people were experiencing.

Lilian Ngoyi dropped out of high school to support her family. As a worker in the garment trade she struggled against poverty through the depression and war years. In the early 1950's, a widow supporting two children and a mother, Lilian Ngoyi crossed a segregated line in a Post Office and asked to be served at a window reserved for whites. That action led her into a campaign of resistance to the laws of Apartheid.

The decade had opened with the Defiance Campaign - a campaign of civil disobedience in which thousands of people crossed the colour line, sitting on benches, boarding buses, entering areas allocated to specific races... and then offered themselves up for arrest.

It was the afternoon... we were going to walk into Boksburg location without permits. We were the first batch of women to go and 'defy'; We just walked down the Boksburg main road and when we got to the gates we were told that we couldn't enter without a permit. And then when we were about half-way down this long street we were promptly arrested.
HELEN JOSEPH:

Look the people who went into the Defiance Campaign, they did not think themselves that by going to jail they were going to have the laws rescinded in parliament. But they did think that by going to jail they would focus the eyes of the world on South Africa. And the same thing is true of the Pass demonstrations. We wanted to make South Africa and the world aware that the women were opposed to Passes!

NARRATOR:

The first big demonstration organised by the Women's Federation was a protest to Union Buildings - the seat of the all-white government in Pretoria. 2000 women went to see the Prime Minister with letters protesting the proposed Passes for women. His reply? To start issuing Passes to women for the first time... pretending that they were not Passes, but permits to show that women needed no permits!

And now the women began to be surprised..."Why is that?" And then after that the women made the meetings and I led the deputation to the Langa Administration. When we came there we ask Mr. Rogers, superintendent: "Why?". He said it's because the government is assorting the people who must stay here in Cape Town.

SONG: "Thina Silulatsha"
FRANCES BAARD: Oh! We had a lot of people who wanted to come to Pretoria! Yes, the people were very, very enthusiastic that time. They wanted to see and they wanted to come to Pretoria. And those, even those who didn't want to come, they... I mean they helped in many ways to raise up the money.

NARRATOR: In 1956 the Federation was organising a mass protest of women from all over South Africa. Many obstacles were put in their way: a few days before the protest, permission to hold the meeting was withdrawn.

HELEN JOSEPH: And that's when we thought up the scheme of each woman having an individual protest. We discussed it with the lawyers and said: Look, supposing Mrs. Kumalo says "I want to go to the Prime Minister, and I'm taking my letter to him, and I'm signing that letter and I'm going on the 9th of August." But supposing that Mrs. Cachalia also says "I want to send a letter to the Prime Minister, or whoever it was, and I'm going to sign that letter and I happen to go there on the 9th of August..." does that make it a 'common purpose'? And they ruled that it wasn't a 'common purpose' provided each woman had her paper in her hand.

FLORENCE MKIZE: Lot of buses were stopped on the way! So we had to use some tactics - we pretend that we're going for a wedding - they believe it. We say: "No we're going to a wedding"... "We're going to the football... we've got nothing to do with the politics!"
And the day before we were due to go to Pretoria, we got the news that all the licenses for the buses that the women had hired from all up and down the Reef had been cancelled. And so there were no buses! And with Robert Resha we went in my car, went all up and down the Reef saying to the women "Look no buses - you must get yourselves to Pretoria by train." But not knowing that they would be able to... we took everything in blind faith that they would be able to get to Pretoria! And early in the morning we were on our way to pick up Lilian, because we must get to Pretoria very early... and we drove in Newclair, below the great embankment... and the trains come across the top of the embankment... and as we drove there we looked up, and I saw the train! And out of every window in the train there were women's heads, and they were waving and shouting and singing these freedom songs they were singing! And I knew that it was going to succeed! I cried - I couldn't help it - Stephen said to me "What the hell are you crying for?" I cried tears of absolute joy, because I knew that nothing could stop them - they were on that train and they were going to Pretoria!

SONG: "Wathint 'abafazi..." (You have touched a woman, you have struck a rock!)

That was the most beautiful protest I ever experienced in my life - to see the women of South Africa together!
Women of all races, from all walks of life and from every corner of the country gathered at the citadel of Apartheid to demand the abolition of Passes. But the Prime Minister refused to see them, so the leaders carried the petitions bearing over a hundred thousand signatures into his office. Outside the women waited in total silence, thumbs raised in the Africa salute. At the end of 30 minutes the Amphitheatre was filled with the voices of 20,000 women!

Florence Mkize:

Just thinking when the women were singing:
"Wathint'abafazi, waythint' imbolodo, uzo kufa!"
That it means "Strydom, You have touched a woman, You have struck a Rock!" The women sing in Pretoria that day...

Narrator:

The government struck back and put the women's leaders amongst the 156 people who were on trial for high treason. Amongst them were Lilian Ngoyi, Helen Joseph and Frances Baard...

The State tried to show that the accused were planning to violently overthrow the government, and called for the death penalty. The trial dragged on for 4 long years, and then a verdict of not guilty was returned. But the government was determined to undermine the women's opposition and in 1956 served banning orders on Lilian Ngoyi and Helen Joseph.
HELEN JOSEPH:
I got my first ban at the beginning of the Treason Trial - but it was only a ban on gatherings... we could attend social gatherings, so all we had to do for important discussions was to sit with cups of tea on our laps. I think the amount of tea and pink cakes that I consumed in those 4 years is absolutely revolting to think of!

NARRATOR:
Meanwhile the Pass Issuing Unit crawled relentlessly around the countryside - where they least expected opposition. They were taken by surprise! Although many women did accept the Pass, hundreds just threw them away and marched off to speak to local officials.

When the government reached the cities its first target was the Nursing profession - one of the few escapes from domestic or farm labour open to African women - requiring years of sacrifice and struggle from the nurses and from their families. Now Passes were to be demanded for training and registration... Would the nurses risk their hard won status by refusing to take them? "Our mothers were washerwomen," they declared, "our mothers educated us. We will go back to the washtubs but we will not carry Passes!"
As the government had had little success with the nurses, it now turned on the most isolated and unprotected of all women: the thousands of domestic servants living alone in tiny rooms in the backyards of white residential suburbs, forbidden to have their husbands or children with them, dependant on the "madam" for the roof over their heads and the few pounds a month in their pockets...

This time the government appealed to the employers, not to the women themselves. Fearful of dismissal and destitution the servants went down to the Pass Offices... and for a moment it looked as though the government had won!

But then the call went out for all women to join the struggle and defeat the Pass as our mothers had in 1913!

**SONG** "Masiye ku Sebenza"
(We are working... for Africa)

And then the policeman come to us
and get us, grip us... and then we also grip the policeman
and then we fall on the ground,
and then when we fall on the ground
they caught us and they arrest us...
they put us into vans and they went away with us!
ALEXANDRIA LUKE:  
I just leave my baby and my two little sons that day, and they just close the door - without food, without anything!

ALEXANDRIA LUKE:  
Conditions were indescribable in the cells - every inch was crowded with women: old women, young women, babies, schoolchildren, pregnant women...

ALEXANDRIA LUKE:  
About 3 days I couldn't eat - I was just thinking about my children. After 3 days I think: Alright. If I'm dead, I'm dead... I can't help it - because I'm also dead now, I'm in jail. I can't release myself - it's not easy to release myself.

NARRATOR:  
No court could accommodate all the women and mass trials were held in the cells and corridors. The women refused bail, though anxious fathers and husbands waited outside willing to pay.

The police were there too, assuring the public that they would not be frightened off the task of maintaining law and order!

At midday the first lot of women were released when their charges were withdrawn. The crowd surged forward to greet them... and the police charged.
FRANCES BAARD:

Let me say, first we were arrested, there was a lot of women, ne? And we went to court and some of the women were convicted - and of course some of the leaders of the organisation. And I was discharged then. And from there I was re-arrested, immediately I came out of the court I was re-arrested and I was taken back to... back to Port Elisabeth - to this solitary confinement, as I've said. This solitary confinement is something which really drives you mad, because they put you in jail in those cells, without anything to read, or without seeing anybody... they just bring your food and push it like this with a foot to you...

MARRATOR:

The Women's Federation declared 1959 to be the greatest anti-Pass year... and called for the active entry of men into the campaign. The Nationalist government had, throughout the decade, been consolidating its policies... and was steadily removing all opportunities for peaceful and legal opposition. Despite increased police activity, arrests, beatings and prison, the women felt stronger and more united - for 7 years they had managed to prevent the government from making Passes for women mandatory. They had begun to feel their political strength, and now widened their protest to include all of their grievances: inferior education, low wages, bad living conditions, forced resettlements... and government sponsored beerhalls.
1959 was a very big demonstration - the women against the beerhall... trying to tell their husbands not to patronise beerhall. Women were given only 5 minutes to disperse and the police fired the shot against the innocent demonstrators. That was 1959, in June. I was there... There were a lot of women! There were hundreds of women were pouring from every part of Cato Manor - here. Women they were pouring all over. It was not organised - it came automatically when we were organising Passes. Their husbands used to earn a very little and spend the last money what they had in the beerhalls. So the women decided that if we call a boycott of the beerhall, well that will protect their homes. And the policemen came and rallied around there...hundreds of policemen were there. And the manager for the Administration Department, he came and addressed the women. So he didn't come to any conclusion about the women's grievances, and he didn't hear anything what the women said. So he ordered the police to fire the shot! So we were carrying those who were wounded. Little children were caught by bullets here! It was terrible that time!
NARRATOR:

"Makabongwe Amakosikazi!" ... Let the Women be thanked read the bright red banner flown by the men of the African National Congress in September 1959. Encouraged by the women's determined resistance, the men now resolved to join the anti-Pass campaign.

In March 1960 the Pan African Congress called a nationwide protest in which men and women would go without Passes to the nearest police station and surrender themselves for arrest.

ALEXANDRIA LUKA:

We just think we mustn't go to work, we must go to town to discuss about these passes. They are going to ask, ask, ask our questions about the Pass laws. Everybody in the location! Everybody was powerful, no tiredness, no nothing. We were just singing "Mkosi Sikel'i Africa"... "We don't want Pass, we don't want Pass! We are going to put this Pass to the fire!"

We just go straight... and then after that, instead of questioning them, they bring the Sarrasens and they shoot the people! They shoot the people.

NARRATOR:

A wave of shock and horror swept South Africa and the world. 69 people had been killed at Sharpeville, nearly all shot in the back, and hundreds wounded. Would peaceful protest no longer be tolerated? The government then declared a State of Emergency, outlawed the liberation movements, and detained over 20,000 people!
When Lilian Ngoyi died in March 1980 she was still under banning orders. For most of the 20 years since Harpeville, Lilian had been silenced and confined to her home.

Dora Tamana was detained and spent 5 years under banning orders.

Amina Cachalia was banned for 15 years.

Helen Joseph was the first person to be placed under house arrest. For 9 years no-one walked down her garden path except the Special Branch. Helen received her latest banning order shortly after her 75th birthday, in June 1980.

Frances Baard was detained, banned, spent a year in solitary confinement and 5 years in jail. On her release she was banished to Mabopane, a thousand miles from her home in Port Elizabeth.

Having removed the leadership, the government acted quickly to bring the women under control. Every aspect of life was made dependent on the Pass - jobs, housing, schooling - even the purchase of railway tickets and groceries.

Finally in 1963, a full 50 years after the first anti-Pass protest it became mandatory for women to carry Passes.

Frances Baard:
Well I don't know what you mean by tired?

Interviewer:
Do you not want to give up?

/...
FRANCES BAARD:
I can't give up because the spirit is still there. I can't help it, even if I want to give up, but the spirit is still there. Although I can't do everything physically... you understand what I mean? ... But my spirit still wants what I wanted.

NARRATOR:
Mother Lilian, we shall never forget you, nor shall your name die. You will live in the heart of every newborn child, in the breast of the mother who feeds it, in the arms of the father who will love and protect it. Sleep Mother Lilian, for beyond the hills a new dawn is breaking, a new order calling the peoples. We'll march together with our sons and daughters, and freedom, like your long lost lover will hold you in her arms.

SONG: Nkosi Sikel'i Afrika (God bless Africa)