

Author Profiles Struggle

from page A1

She says it has been this way since the 1870s, when diamond mining began in South Africa. Along with gold mining, diamond mining grew into a major industry through the labor of thousands of rural black males who were sent to the city to work — at the expense of the black family unit.

"South African women were not allowed to follow the men to the cities. Because then they would establish communities," Ngcobo says. "They only wanted the labor, not the family."

Some women learn to resist. And They Didn't Die (1990), describes one woman's valiant efforts to exert control over her life despite the constraints of apartheid. The protagonist, Jezile, tries unsuccessfully to live off barren land assigned to her family by the apartheid regime. Later she becomes a domestic worker in a white household, where she is raped and humiliated.

Throughout her trials, Jezile remains determined to change her life for the better, and continues to challenge racist policy.

Ngcobo says most rural South African women wouldn't think of doing the things Jezile does, such as lying to get a medical pass to leave her village, searching for her husband in the city, and telling him that - like it or not - she has come to be with him.

"I had to release her by making her mind strong enough," Ngcobo said, "and making her husband willing to have a woman who takes decisions and informs him about her decisions. Because normally rural men wouldn't accept that."

Yet Ngcobo says the absence of men in rural communities has actually led to the empowerment of some women.

"This migratory labor system has left women in the countryside. They run their own lives, and make decisions every day. In a sense, it

has liberated them. Many men have had to relent to that power balance."

Women preserved African culture

Through the century, as men were relocated to the cities to drive the mining industry, they were faced for the first time with wholesale racial persecution. White city-dwellers made it clear that black people's ways and traditions were culturally inferior. They were branded as uncivilized.

"Everybody was looking down on them and down on their culture," Ngcobo says. "It was hard to believe that one human being could be so unkind to another for no apparent reason. They couldn't understand why they were so persecuted."

Since their culture seemed to be the most offending aspect about them, they began to discard their traditional ways. Black men in the city who tried to cling to their culture were denounced by blacks and whites alike.

But in the rural villages, African women carried on the old customs. Ngcobo says a great debt is owed to those women.

"African communities have survived the whole oppressive onslaught because of the strength of these communities, which are under women."

A family reunited at last. Ngcobo's own past is an example of family disintegration.

She and her husband became political exiles after the March 21, 1960 demonstrations outside Johannesburg. Thousands of South Africans assembled peacefully to protest apartheid policy requiring blacks to obtain passes for any kind of travel. During the demonstrations, police opened fire on the crowd. Sixty-nine people were killed and thousands arrested and imprisoned, including Ngcobo's husband.

By 1963, the political climate had grown even more oppressive.

New CBC Members

Most CBC members told reporters that unemployment, skyrocketing health care costs, education and urban blight top their list of concerns.

However, with 13 CBC members now elected from newly established congressional districts in the

South, "issues affecting this region are obviously going to get a lot more attention within this body," said Rep. Kweisi Mfume of Baltimore.

The CBC's repeated support of proposals to "rebuild the cities" may no longer be considered a top priority,

he emphasized, with every state in the "old South" now having at least one black representative and Georgia, North Carolina and Louisiana will each have two CBC members.

In the 22 years since its founding, CBC members have advanced

to key positions on House of Representatives committees to affect needed changes in federal policies. In the closing Congress, CBC members introduced more than 400 individual bills and co-sponsored an "unprecedented" 11,000 legislative measures.

from page A1

Non-Violence Predicted For Malcolm X Audiences

BY THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

A Nebraska Wesleyan University professor doubts that Wednesday's opening of the movie "Malcolm X" will lead to violence as some fear.

"I don't think the life story of Malcolm X encourages violence, when told from start to finish," said associate sociology professor David Iaquina, who teaches a course in race relations.

Iaquina regularly uses "The Autobiography of Malcolm X" in the course.

Director Spike Lee's movie about the civil rights leader who was killed in February 1965 opens across the nation on Wednesday.

Malcolm X was shot while speaking in New York City. Three members of the Nation of Islam, with whom Malcolm X had split, were convicted.

Iaquina said people who see the film will be surprised by what they don't know about Malcolm X, who was born Malcolm Little in 1925 in Omaha.

When he was 3 years old, his family moved to Milwaukee.

Iaquina said that in his early years of involvement with the Nation of Islam, Malcolm X preached black separatism.

But his views changed drastically prior to his assassination, Iaquina said.

"The best kept secret is the transformation towards the end of his life, when he became disillusioned with the black leadership of the Nation of Islam," Iaquina said.

The disillusionment was compounded by Malcolm's trip to the Middle East, where he saw people of all colors who had a common belief in Islam, Iaquina said.

In Omaha, a historical marker stands on the empty lot where Malcolm X's home once stood, but residents of the neighborhood said they were sad the city doesn't have a more elaborate tribute.

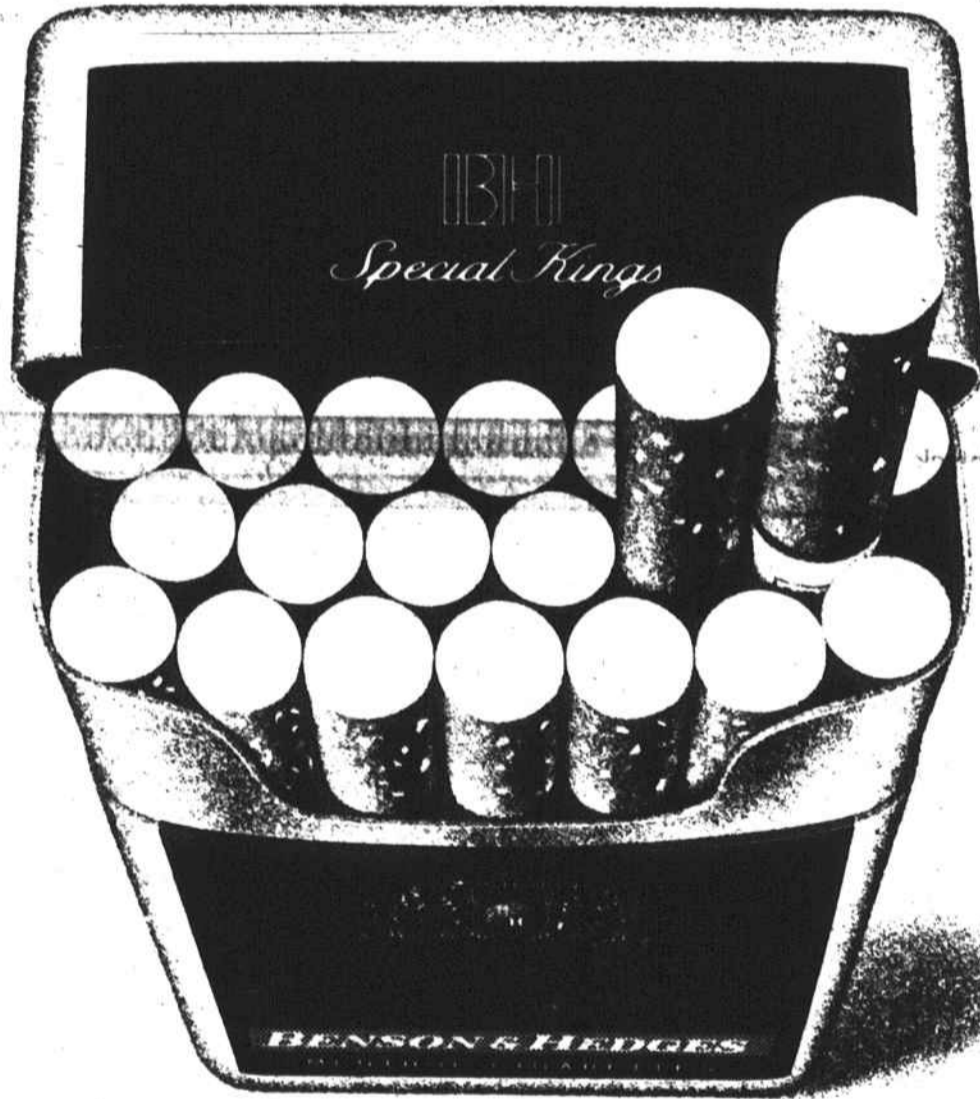
"A lot of people are letting his legacy die," said Dawn Holmes, who lives near the lot.

"If it wasn't for the few who are fighting, it probably would be dead," she said.

Residents said they would like to see flowers planted on the lot to commemorate Malcolm X.

They also said citizens need to mobilize behind Rowena Moore, president and founder of the Malcolm X Memorial Foundation, to help build a memorial center.

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