

Profile

being a kind of rhinoceros hide at which were hurled tear gas, batons, bullets and ferocious police dogs."

A brief acquaintance with a leader of the Pan-African movement gave her "a comfortable black skin to live and work in." But she remained suspicious of political movements and leaders.

She turned instead to the ordinary people with their poverty and dignity for a vision of the future that could be built up together.

Bessie Head fled from the violence of the country of her birth on an exit visa at the age of 27. "The environment (South Africa) completely defeated me, as a writer."

She needed "a quiet backwater, where ideas and inventions dominate and people have time to love each other."

She found this quiet back-

"It was a winter morning. Just before dawn the stars shone like bright, polished jewels in the sky and a half-eclipsed moon suddenly shone with hauntingly beautiful light. And it was a summer afternoon. The summer rain filled my yard with flowers. I seemed to be living too, all the time, with animals' eyes - goats staring at me, cows staring at me, chickens staring at me. I slowly came alive with the background scenery. What have I said about the people of a free land, I who borrowed their clothes, their goats, their sunrises and sunsets for my books? Not anything very polite, it seems."

water in Serowe, a large village in Botswana. Serowe was full of new ideas and inventions at the time she arrived.

The development brigades under the leadership of Patrick van Rensburg were just beginning their work, which was to grow and flourish over the next 12 years. It was in this peaceful rural environment that Bessie Head wrote her novels and stories.

(All quotes from: Craig Mackenzie: *Bessie Head. A woman alone*. Autobiographical writings. Heineman 1990)

D I C T I O N A R Y

outcast - a person who is rejected by his or her home, country, and society.

peculiar - unusual or strange.

defeated - frustrated, baffled.

ferocious - wildly cruel, savage, beastly.

A woman's place is in the forum

Thursday, 15 April, marked a historical event when 70 women came together in Windhoek for the first meeting of the Women's Forum. It was decided that the forum will provide a platform where the work of women and their struggle can be consolidated.

The forum will not take on any typical organisational structure, and the aim is to lobby for greater powers. Planning for specific events and issues will also take place at forum meetings, and strengthening of networks, which will include women from outside Windhoek was identified as a need.

The emphasis, throughout, will

be to actively engage in campaigns that will promote women's rights. The forum will act as a pressure group for changes in societal attitudes and behaviours towards women.

The next meeting will take

place on Thursday 13 May at 17H30 at the Arts Association (corner of Leutwein and John Meinert Streets) where concrete proposals for campaigns will be forwarded. All women are most welcome to attend.

