

**CAPE TOWN BRANCH REPORT ON MEETING
WITH AMERICAN DELEGATION, WOMEN IN
EDUCATION, 15 APRIL 2003**

By
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Under the auspices of the People to People Ambassador Programs a delegation of Women in Education, led by Professor Jacqueline Shahzadi, visited South Africa during the period 6-17 April 2003. They wished to make contacts with women in education to gain better understanding of educational issues in this country, and in particular to understand the effects of a history of apartheid on the education of previously disadvantaged groups, especially of women and girls.

They visited various institutions of higher education, in Johannesburg, Pretoria and Cape Town. A meeting with members of the Cape Town Branch of SAAWG was held in one of the lecturing venues in the Department of Education at the University of Cape Town (arranged by Jean Baxen, one of our members). There were 17 members of the delegation, and branch members. In the absence of the Branch President, I chaired the meeting as Immediate Past President of the Cape Town Branch. A panel of 3 speakers was assembled, all women who are deeply involved in various aspects of education, especially of previously disadvantaged groups, as it was felt that the visitors would be interested to learn of some of the initiatives that have been undertaken in post-apartheid South Africa to overcome the disparities in education between different population groups.

The three speakers were:

Dr Lydia Abel, Director of the Schools Development Unit at UCT, which has various projects, running or at the planning stage, that are aimed at the ongoing training of school teachers in service, especially from disadvantaged schools in rural districts. The main fields for intervention are mathematics and science, literacy and life-skills. The transition to outcomes-based education is also presenting problems for teachers.

Dr Bette Davidowitz, of the Department of Chemistry at UCT, who runs the Academic Development Programme in that Department. This is aimed at students who enter the Science Faculty from a disadvantaged background, with neither the preparation required nor the number of points in the matriculation examination to enable them to be placed in the mainstream first-year Chemistry courses. Through a specially designed curriculum, consisting of lectures, tutorials and practical work, these students are helped to overcome their educational deficits.

Fatima Slemming, a member of the Cape Town Branch who is presently acting as Co-ordinator of the Writing Centre at UWC, spoke on the objectives of this project and how they are being achieved. The Writing Centre provides assistance to all UWC students, postgraduate as well as undergraduate, on matters connected with academic writing and related research activities.

The meeting, which lasted for two hours, produced much of interest to both the delegates and the speakers. Professor Shahzadi also expressed the appreciation of the delegation to the Cape Town Branch of SAAWG for organising the meeting and, on behalf of the American Association of University Women, extended congratulations to our Association on the occasion of our 80th anniversary.

In a letter of thanks received from People to People International, South African Chapter, Andre Thomas mentioned that the delegates were "stimulated and challenged by what they had encountered in their meetings" He also thanked SAAWG for the time, effort and interest we took, remarking that it was a pleasure to have people such as those in our association who are making a difference here in South Africa.