

## Theater from a woman's point of view: Glen Norah Women's Theater Group



The Glen Norah Women's Theater Group was recently launched in Harare, Zimbabwe.

A member of the Zimbabwe Association of Community Theater, the group is a result of the Women in Theatre Conference held in 1990 at the University of Zimbabwe and attended by women theater artists from Jamaica, Zambia, Botswana, Tan-

zania, South Africa and Zimbabwe.

Created mainly as a fulltime women's group, the Glen Norah Women's Theater Group aims at using theater to articulate various women's issues especially those which touch on the role of women in the country's socioeconomic development.

The formation of the group is an important event in the history of theater in Zimbabwe. Up until now most theater groups were headed by men and their attempts to include women's issues in their plays, always take a man's point of view. For example, an AIDS play normally shows the man as an "AIDS victim" (he gets it from women).

He is the central character. His wife, girlfriend, etc. and their problems are of secondary importance. The Glen Norah Women's Theater Group intends to show women's problems, and issues from a woman's point of view.

In collectively creating the play *Who is to Blame*, the theatre group worked with members of Just for Women which is another Harare based women's theatre group. *Who is to Blame* is a play about unemployed women in Zimbabwe. It traces the life of a rural girl from her studies to employment. Her friend's brother tries to rape her as payment for assisting her find a job. She ends up a prostitute. In the end, she leads the women out of prostitution into forming a cooperative where they are able to use their performing arts talent to earn a decent living. *Who is to Blame* uses traditional music and dances in an approach that tries successfully to involve the audience.

Glen Norah Women's Theater Group has scheduled performance tours in Zimbabwe and Botswana. The group plans to hold theatre workshops for women especially in teacher training colleges. It is working on a play on AIDS from a woman's perspective. The aim is to create a play where the audience is encouraged to understand how to handle AIDS pa-

tients and how those who are HIV positive can face the future.

Another theme the group plans to explore is that of cooperatives and exploring some causes of their failure.

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