

Situating the role of patriarchy in sexual violence

The stories of black women



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Foreword

Ecumenical Service for Socio-Economic Transformation (ESSET) is an independent ecumenical organization that works to achieve social justice for the poor and vulnerable through research, awareness-raising, solidarity and advocacy.

Through our work, we aim to:

- Increase social justice activism among church leaders and other ecumenical actors.
- Promote decent work in the informal trading sector.
- Increase the livelihoods prospects of women informal traders.
- Promote the Solidarity Economy and build a Solidarity Economy movement in the South African Development Community (SADC).
- Uproot gender-based violence, homophobia and xenophobia.
- Promote and build local and regional solidarity networks of organizations of the poor and vulnerable social groups.

Moreover, we create platforms for informal trader organizations, women's cooperatives, youth organizations, women's organizations, social movements and queer organizations to share struggle lessons, develop common campaigns, and to build solidarity.

Our initiatives are unapologetically biased towards women, because they tend to bear the brunt of poverty, discrimination, exploitation and abuse. We have and continue to provide legal literacy, skills and leadership training to women informal traders. We initiated a women's cooperatives project in South Africa, Lesotho and Swaziland, in 2013, to increase the livelihoods prospects of women informal traders. Eleven women's cooperatives and a women's business association were formed in 2014. ESSET continues to provide capacity-building support to the women's cooperatives in order to build cohesion, capacity and self-reliance in the cooperatives.

We have also been raising awareness and mobilizing women and men to fight violence against women in the informal trading sector and in working class communities. In 2015, we held discussions with 98 women informal cross-border traders, who indicated that they are often forced to have unprotected sex with strange men in exchange for food and shelter. This put them at risk of contracting HIV. The tragedy is that very few governments in the SADC region have HIV care and support programmes for informal cross-border traders. In addition, we conducted four workshops on gender-based violence, including sexual violence, emotional violence and economic violence, with 115 young women and men from various working class communities to mobilize the youth to take action gender-based violence.

The theory of change that underpins ESSET's work is that the emancipation of the poor and vulnerable can only be achieved by the poor and vulnerable themselves. ESSET does not regard itself as a gatekeeper or as a voice of the poor and vulnerable. The objective of this booklet is thus to provide a platform for black working class women to tell their own stories of violence. Moreover, the booklet aims to stimulate discussion in informal trader organizations, youth organizations and church organizations about the root causes of sexual violence.

Ms Sonto Magwaza - The Executive Director

I am Khanga

*I wrap myself around the curvaceous bodies of women all over Africa
I am the perfect nightdress on those hot African nights
The ideal attire for household chores
I secure babies happily on their mother's backs
Am the perfect gift for new bride and new mother alike
Armed with proverbs, I am vehicle for communication between women
I exist for the comfort and convenience of a woman
But no no no make no mistake ...
I am not here to please a man
And I certainly am not a seductress
Please don't use me as an excuse to rape
Don't hide behind me when you choose to abuse
You see
That's what he said my Malume
The man who called himself my daddy's best friend
Shared a cell with him on [Robben] Island for ten whole years
He said I wanted it
That my khanga said it
That with it I lured him to my bed
That with it I want you is what I said
But what about the NO I uttered with my mouth
Not once but twice
And the please no I said with my body
What about the tear that ran down my face as I lay stiff with shock
In what sick world is that sex
In what sick world is that consent
The same world where the rapist becomes the victim
The same world where I become the bitch that must burn
The same world where I am forced into exile because I spoke out?
This is NOT my world
I reject that world
My world is a world where fathers protect and don't rape
My world is a world where a woman can speak out
Without fear for her safety
My world is a world where no one, but no one is above the law
My world is a world where sex is pleasurable not painful*

Author: Fezeka Khuzwayo

Violence through the eyes of black working class women

Violence in the 'promised' land against women farmers

We were a group of women traders that were ready to plant vegetables in order to sell them. All that we were short of the land to farm on.

One day, we as the group of trading farmers found ourselves very fortunate when we met a man that informed us that he had sold his house and bought a piece of land in De Deur (midVaal) a place situated between Johannesburg and Vereeniging.

We were so happy that we didn't waste time. We set a date to go and see the place.

Arriving at the place was like arriving in the 'promised' land of milk and honey, because there was running water, electricity, a house and the land we were going to use for our farming. That was everything we needed as farmers.

Each of us had to bring a spade, fork-spade, a rake or a pick (equipment).

When we arrived, the so-called owner of the land told us that he was our chairperson and he had already appointed his secretary. This secretary was a young beautiful lady.

Our chairperson was going to be staying in the outside room. There were two rooms, a garage and the main house. The chairperson told us that we were going to share the house as the farmers, and suggested that the secretary must stay in one of the outside rooms next to the garage that he was occupying. Little did we know or suspect his dirty plans.

We did not waste any time at all, the following day we began cleaning the yard for our vegetable garden and we started planting our seeds. As days went by, the secretary wanted to join us in the main house after telling us that the chairperson wanted to sleep with her because he had given her employment. We sent the youngest member of our group to go and share the room with her without telling the chairperson and this made him very angry, he told us that every decision taken must involve him as well. Mind you, this man appeared as being very matured and very respectable, and he had bought this land to share with us (small farmers "how generous he was") and for that we did not want to disappoint him.

After a few days he appointed a new young Sotho girl as the secretary and chased the two young girls back to the main house and allocated the new secretary the room next to his room. He then told her that he wanted to sleep with her and that he would marry her so that she can get South African citizenship. The young member agreed to sleep with him, being the owner of the land and her future husband, with the hopes of becoming a South African citizen. *Ukungazi kufana nokungaboni.*

In the mist of all of that, two beautiful aged women joined us. At that time everything we wanted to do had to ask the secretary/madam-to-be. Who together with the chairperson had started to own us, because this was their property.

Within two months after the arrival of the two middle aged women, he informed us that the Sotho girl was not performing her secretarial duties properly. He then appointed one of the two women who had recently joined us.

Oh! Our vegetables were growing very nicely, that we did not have the time to bother ourselves with these small matters.

One day when we had just started selling our vegetables (spinach, carrots, beetroot, lettuce, green beans, green pepper, etc.) and everything was going well, came a man driving a twin-cab van, he walked around the yard and eventually went inside the house.

We were very happy because we thought that he was going to be our big customer as he really looked like a business man.

When we had first arrived on the land there had been two loads of sand and bricks that had been put where we now had our garden, we had moved the sand and bricks to a corner near the house. When the man came out of the house, he was shouting at our chairperson asking him who had moved his sand and bricks to that place. We were surprised by this question because we knew the chairperson to be the owner of the land. Our reply, all of us removed the sand and the bricks so that we can have a bigger space to plant our vegetables. He then asked us who had given us permission to move anything on his property. This was becoming too much. We asked him: Who are you on our land that we share with our chairperson that is the owner of this land to speak to us like this?

The man ignored our question but instead turned and asked our chairperson who's land this was. Our chairperson responded by saying, "but you said we can plant the vegetables on this land". This man then told us that this is his land and our chairperson is his friend who has asked to use his land to plant vegetables never telling him that he (the chairperson) was bringing the whole nation onto his property.

This was a real surprise to us, we asked our chairperson who this man really was and he told us that the man is the real owner of the land, but that he (the chairperson) was planning to buy the land from his friend since he was not staying on the property.

The man then ordered us to move his sand and bricks back to where we had found them and that it should be done before the end of that day.

We had no choice but to do as the owner had ordered. *Oh ixesha namandla amanhaka ethu esiwamoshe ngokulahlekiswa indoda eyexokayo.*

At that moment we were not happy with the way our chairperson was conducting himself. He had become our boss and not our partner. He was not doing anything to help us in the vegetable garden and most of all, he had been set on sleeping with every one of us within the co-operative we were about to register. We were to pay for the use of his friend's land by sleeping with him.

Being desperate can put women in an unjust situation like the one we found ourselves in.

This man just wanted to harass us socially, emotionally and sexually.

Nomsa Madikizela

Ak47's on Women's Day in Freedom Park: Black women rising against oppression

It was on a Women's Day when we as black women were being intimidated by policemen with their big guns, scary weapons, which are Ak47's. It was so sad because there were children and elders.

The reason why we met was because we knew the importance of solidarity. We are all from a society where it is most of us women, who are being denied opportunities, and we are also being robbed of our privileges and roles, and we thought it was a problem to us. That is why on that day on Women's Day it was so important for us as women to come together as a collective not to come to celebrate, but to come and pray together hold hands and sit so we can find ways of fighting all those problems we are facing as black women.

We are very conscious of what is happening around us and we say it's enough. We have come to the realization that we live in a society where we as women are very powerful and useful but we are still considered as inferior and it is a very serious concern.

The fact that we are being robbed of our roles as presidents and our status as heroes it is a problem and we are taking a stand. We are facing serious discriminative practice against us as women and men and it is affecting us in every aspect of life. There is also a very serious violence that we are facing as black poor women that comes in the form of rape, beatings and intimidations which is really a problem; we cannot keep allowing ourselves to be treated as the second class citizens.

We are also facing another problem of this system of patriarchy and the saddest thing about it is that it has been influenced by our cultures that we are expected to follow and respect. Back in the olden days we were taught to obey the rules, do things without questioning which is a problem. Maybe we as victims couldn't challenge our cultures because we didn't know much, we didn't understand things, but now we things are different, we are conscious about what is happening and we want to take action.

Women oppression has been there for years, we've seen women ordered not to work apparently because it's a men's job, the only jobs that women are entitled to are to take on full responsibilities of domestic work so the million dollar question is this so?.

After everything that happened in Freedom Park on Women's Day, being intimidated by men, we've all come to the decision of saying "enough is enough". We are going to rise.

We are tired of being bullied into silence, being harassed sexually, mentally and physically being robbed of our privileges, our land and resources.

We are not yet at a point where we can celebrate the freedom of women, we are still oppressed and it is so amazing to see so many women willing to take a stand to fight this oppression against women, because to make our society a better place the struggle for women's liberation still needs to go on.

Tshepiso Tshepo Ramahloke

A brave woman from Limpopo: Rising above patriarchal power

ke nna MAHLAKO, ke belegilwe ka ngwaha wa 1987-02-06 motswenga wa maila mmapintse gola Limpopo Province, Polokwane City Sekhukhune District.

Ke kopane le kgakanego bophelong baka ya go ima ka mengwaga ye16. Ka yeo naka ke be ke le mphatong wagrade 9 kangwaga wa 2002 ka ba katlogela sekolo kabaka la oba ke sena mofepi wa ngwana a ka se kgone go fepa resewa ,tatago ngwano oile o nyaka mubereko ko Pretoria ka “ Babafontien” femingi ya “Big River Dairy” oi le o fepa lesa tekanyo ya dikgwedi tse (9) senyane, ka ngwaha wa 2003 December a se tle gae, a tshentsha le di nomboro tsa mogala, a thoma o jola ka hlogongke ile tloga le mmangwane waka haya Scinoonord police station go bula molato wa sapoto, o ile angwalelwa lengwalelo lengwalo gore a tle tshekong. O tlogetse mosomo kago tshaba tshelete yasapoto keile ka tsebisa batswadi bjang bare ke mo tlogele ke godise ngwana ke kogone go boela sekolong.

Ka ngwaga wa2005 ke boetse sekolong ka dira grade10, kage be ke dutse phasitse go fihla ke fetsa matric in 2007. Ke phasitse la symbol ya (S). ka ge go be go sa some motho gae ke paletswe ke go ya Unisa, bagwera ba ile nna ka sala ke hlapisa ngwana a eya Pre-school.

Ka2009 ka bile moithaupi ka hlatlonang Y- center ka lefapneng la love-life. Ke be ke le mo lehlakoneng la body-Ys ke bitswa mpintsi ke ile ka ithuta computer literacy ka cyber-ys gona hlatlonang y-center.

Ka ngwaga wa2010 ka kgopelwa go ba mothusi ka lebenkeleng la kwena shopping center ka Scinoonord ka wona ngwaga wo ka kopana le ntate wa driving school o ile a mpotsa gore o hladile mosadi. Ke dutse le yena go fihlela ke ima ka December 2010 , ke belege ngwana ka2011 September a sapota kamorago ga go tseba gore onale basadi ba ba raro o hladile bababedi ika tshoga ge ke mmotsisa are yena o tshabile gore ke tlo mo gana.

Ke dutse le yena ke gepeletswa ke gore ke tatgo ngwana efela ke lewa ke dihlong gubane bagwera baka ge ba bolela ka masogana a bona nna ke be ke sa bolele selo. Taba ye nngwe yeo e ntshwenyago ke gore basadi ba o a ba etela ga ke na bahlatse bja gore robala le bona ke tshwenywa ke gore o gana dikgotlopo gee le gore e mongwe o nale STI's lenna ke tlo amega.

Ka2014 March-April ile ka babjew ke bolletswi bjwa lepanta, ke ile ka botswa gore boltswe bjo bo hlolwa ke gore o dula le monna wa basadi ba bantshi wo mongwe aka berekisa dilo tsa go se loke mo monneng go go kwesa bohloko. Ke ile ka mmontsha mabaka gore ke tlo boela morago efela a hlokomele ngwana, mme yena a re nkase fepe ngwana ke sa robale le mmagwe.

Ke be ruta khari gude “lets learn” programme ya go thusa batho ba bagolo ka2014 le 2015 ke ile ka amogela seemo sa go ba motswadi o tee kage kebe ke hwetsa tshete empa gona bjale mosom o fedile bana ba ja “child support grant” ba apara ka yona ga e kgone selo.

Ka iri le sebak se relego go sona ga ke some ngwana waka wamathomo o dira gradew 8, wa bobedi o pre-school, keg are ga sehlopha seo se batswago “ United Communities Action” (UCA) ke holofela gore ka yona le tlhahlo yeo re e hwetsago go ba ESSET nka fihlelela toro yaka.

Mmuso wa gabo rena go o re berekele, kagore ge motho wa tshetele a nale phoso, ga a otlwe ga ka ka fao a sentsego, ge o bula molato ba no ga sega ka mo dipelong ka ge ba setse ba amogetse jojo, otlano makala o sa bitswe court ke ka lebaka leo re homotago le gere nale mathata ka gore re tseba gore re ka se thuswe, fe moo re tlo senyegelwago.

Go meloko, metswaile le bagwera ke re tseang mehlala ka rena bobesi ba lena setlo gata mo tlhako ya pele e gatilego, tsenang sekolo le kgone go hwetsa dipasati tsago le tswetsa pele le tle hweste mesomo.

Go ya ka tumo yak age ke be ke hlamela naga melao ke be ke tlale molao wola wa gore “motho o balaile le yena a bolawe Section 22 Bill of Rights” ke bona e noba letlakala borena sere “kgomo ka mogobe e wetsa ke namane” se ra gore le go batswadi ba ka lwa efela ngwana yena o swanetswe go hlokomela.

My name is Mahlako. I was born in 1987-02-06 in the Limpopo province, Polokwane City, Sekhukhune District. I encountered a challenge when I fell pregnant at the tender age of 16. At that time, I was in grade 9. I later dropped out of school in the same year, in 2002, because I had no one to help me look after the child. The father went to Big River Dairy in Babafontein in Pretoria to search for a job. He only provided financial support for the child for nine months and he didn't come home for Christmas in December 2003. He changed his cellphone number and started to cheat on me.

I went to the Sainoonord police station to open a child support case. He was summoned to appear in court, but he wasn't present. He quit his job. I then went to his parents to inform them about the child, but they turned me away and told me to raise the child, so that I could go back to school.

In 2005, I went back to school and completed grade 12 in 2007. There was no bread winner at home. I could not enroll to study at UNISA, because I had to prepare my child for preschool.

In 2009, I volunteered for the Love Life Y-center programme. I gained computer literacy via cyber-ys in the Y-center. The following year, in 2010, I applied for an assistance position at the Kwena shopping center in Sainoonord. I later met a man, who was a driving instructor. He told me that he was divorced. I lived with him until I fell pregnant in December, and I gave birth in September 2011.

What a shock! I later found out that he had three wives, so I confronted him. He said he was afraid that I would not accept his courtship.

I continued to live with him for the sake of the child, but I felt embarrassed when my friends spoke of their younger boyfriends. I just kept quiet. I was worried that he would not use condoms when he visited his wives, and that I could contract sexually transmitted infections. In March-April 2014, I had a sexually transmitted infection. I confronted him and told him that I decided to leave him. He just has to support the child. I refused and said that he would not support the child if can't sleep with the mother.

I was part of the “let's learn” emancipation programme for adults in 2014 and 2015. I accepted my role as a single parent. I had an income until I lost my job, I had to survive on a child support grant. I'm not working at the moment. I am hoping that the United Communities in Action and ESSET will help me to reach my dream.

Our government should provide services to us. Rich men are able to bribe their way out of justice. That is why some of us don't bother, because it is often just a waste of money.

To my family, friends and acquaintances, I urge you to learn from my mistakes. Be motivated to go to school, so to obtain qualifications and better jobs.

Mahlako

How the church is failing women

The church the affianced bride of Christ. She is destined to represent the divine rehabilitation on earth to save people from antidepressants and a visit to psych ward, but so far, she has made compromises with the world making it disloyal to her Master who is God of mercy and grace. She rather the negligent agent that picks what suits her own personal opinions and ignores her key role typifying an organ whereby the spirit of Christ works in the world to create acceptance and create acceptance and become the companion to the traveler. The church is incomplete given people fail to find the realization of fellowship in her.

There has been partial and obvious failure in the church for leaving behind the divorced females. Being in a church myself, my whole life, I came to realize that as long as a woman is married, she stays treated with dignity and honor until she divorces. From there on she treated like nothing beyond the terrible mistake of nature.

Anna was immediately selected the chairperson of women ministries following her wedding ceremony. Three years later she was drained from living under torrents emotional abuse from her husband, so she filed for divorce. Although the church was suppose to remain the love, the support system and the hospital for this woman, the church turned into the blatant persecuting institute making her feel tarnished and unworthy. She was removed from the position she led in this church, and denied to participate in type of service.

This is the critical issue considering that society has burdened the success of a marriage to a woman. She is projected to withstand discomforts and agonies to "make it work". When its broken, its automatically her fault with untold unrealistic ideas dehumanizing women. The isolation and discrimination flooding the church remain one of the reasons and the results people run away from her, instead of turning to her for help.

The church needs to stop adding more guilt, shame and pain through scriptures to condemn. Divorced women need encouragement and a warm welcome in the house of God. Not discrimination.

Lebo Hlaha

Challenges faced by black women in trade: The story of the 2010 World Cup

Bekungunyaka we2010 lapho wonke umutu ejabulela ukuza kwamazwe omhlaba ezodlala ibhola kubangwa indebe yomhlaba. Kwakunjalo nakithi njengoMama abahweba ngempahla ethungiwe. Sonke sasicabanga ngebhizinisi ukuthi nathi sizenzele imali. Kwasithatha amasonto amabili ukulungiselela ukuqala umsebenzi wethu. Lapho sisebenzela khona siqashe ezindaweni ezimaprivate ezahlukene kodwa zingaphakathi khona edolobheni eDurban. Ngesikhathi kuqala ukudlala ibhola izikole zazisupporter indebe yomhlaba. Lapho sabona khona ukuthi fanele sithunge amat-shirt abhalwe South Africa football, ngoba sasinalo ulwazi lokuthi akufanele senze into ebhalwe uAdidas. Saqala-ke sathunga ngenjongo yokudayisa eFlea-Market. Sakwenza loko singazi ukuthi uMasipala weTheku umelene nathi, isizathu esenza ngisho kanjalo ukuthi ngesikhathi sibhizi kufike iofficer yakwaMasipala uMkhize, wabiza uMetro police balinda amakhasimende ukuthi athathe impahla yawo kithi, baqala lapho bathatha impahla yethu bathi akuvumelekile ukuthi thina sidayise impahla yethu. Kwakungeka R20, 000. Uma simubuza uMkhize ukuthi kungani ethatha impahla yethu ngoba phakathi kwethu kukhona amandiyi adayisa impahla efana neyethu wavele wabhoka ngolaka wathi labo banezitolo. Kodwa bebedayisa nathi eFlea-Market.

Ekugcineni uMkhize nomlingani wakhe abasebenza naye kwaMasipala batshena amakhasimende ethu ukuthi awakhokhe uR10,000 okusho ukuthi asekhokhe uR30,000, uR10,000 ababesewukhokhile wawungenayo ireceipt elishoyo ukuthi bakhokhile, ngaphesheya kwethu kuneMarket eWorkshop, kuyindawo enezitolo. uMasipala ufake amatende khona kubukeka kahle, abantu abasebenzela khona abantu bokufika baseAfrica bona bebedayisa uAdidas IFAKE eyabo impahla ayithathwanga. Okushiya nomubuzo ukuthi kungani bebelungiselela indawo? Umusebenzi wethu wawubaphazamisa?. Impendulo yami ithi kungenzeka ukuthi kungenzeka ukuthi abenzela umsebenzi wabo. Kuze kube manje noma yini esiyifunayo ukuze sizithuthukise bayasibopha, kodwa abokufika badayisa yonke indawo,umthola enesitende eFlea-Market ngesonto, phakathi kwezinsuku umthola emgwaqeni enendawo. Kodwa S.A citizen awamulekekile ukuthi ubenezindawo ezimbili.

Izimpahla zethu zazithengwa ngobuningi.

It was 2010, everyone was happy that the World Cup is coming to South Africa. We also shared the same excitement as women who trade by sewing traditional clothes. We all thought that our business would have the opportunity to boom during this time.

It took us two weeks to prepare for the event. We also tried to hire private trading places to attract customers in Durban. When the World Cup started the schools were in support of the event. We then decided that we would produce t-shirts written South African Football, so we could also add the Adidas logo on the t-shirts to increase sales.

We started producing this t-shirts and selling them at flea markets, unaware that the local municipality was against us as informal traders. We realized this when we were busy trading all of sudden, the local municipality sent Mr Mkhize who then called the metro police to confiscate our stock worth 20,000 stating that the t-shirts were produced illegally. What surprised us was that the Indian traders who were trading with us were never harassed when we asked the reason we were told that it is because they owned stores around the city, so they were selling merchandise that was legitimate.

Mr. Mkhize and his partner who worked at the Municipality demanded another R10, 000 from us, which meant that we lost R30, 000 in total. We were not given receipts for these transactions so nothing was on paper. We noted that just across the road there was another market place more like

a workshop, divided into stalls by the municipality. The traders who were placed there were from other parts of Africa and were never harassed, but they were also selling fake Adidas goods, but nothing happened to them, we were shocked by the lack of consistency.

Finally, we ask ourselves why we were treated this way as women. We then came to a conclusion that it was corruption and self-enrichment that remains unchallenged faced by women trading in the streets daily. To this day we continue to experience harassment as women traders. We are only allowed one stall, while our foreign brothers can have multiple stalls.

Nomathemba Khubone

A brave woman who refused to give up

I am Girlie Jam-Jam. I am a third born child. I was born and raised in the rural areas of the Eastern Cape, in the location called Enyhwaiha.

I started my Education at Matshotshisa Junior Primary School, when I passed there I went to Bashee Senior Secondary School.

I am the mother of three handsome boys, ages 20, 14 and 1 year and 2months. Life was not easy at the time. I was living with my grandmother while my mother was in Johannesburg. She never cared about her children. I remember going to school barefoot in the cold and sunny days.

I do not remember having Christmas clothes. I was hurting and I am still hurting. People see us smiling and laughing but they are not aware of our hurts. But when I look back I realize that God was there and he is still faithful in my life.

I started sleeping with every male at an early age. I did that because I was hungry and I wanted to exchange sex for money or food. During my teenage stage I never used sanitary towels, my pads were made from brown paper from sugar a sugar bag.

In 1995, I fell pregnant and the father was nowhere to be found. My grandmother had to send me to Johannesburg to my mother because she was worried about how I would pay for the hospital bill when I go into labour since the fee was R700, so I went to Johannesburg to my mother but when I arrived at my mother's house she chased me away. My aunt had to take me in that day and I went into labour, she took me to Leratang hospital on the 23rd of April and I was there blessed with a baby boy.

I named him Zuko which means (harmony).

I stayed with my aunt for a month and thereafter, I had to go back to the Eastern Cape. Things at that point began to be more difficult, my grandmother was a pensioner and we were all dependant on her grant. Since there was no way for me to go back to school I had to stay at home for a year.

In 1998, I went back to Johannesburg because my grandmother had passed away and there was no one left to take care of us. Living with my mother was not easy because we did not have a mother-daughter relationship.

I met this guy who was from Maputo and we ended up dating, he was loving and caring. Then he changed and started cheating, I had to attend antenatal clinic where I had to take some blood tests. I tested H.I.V positive.

I felt like the world had turned against me. I cried and I was hurting at the same time. The only thing that was in my mind at the time was killing myself.

The father of the baby left me, and once again I was all alone with two kids this time. I continued to be strong while I was not.

I disclosed my status to my family and I did not know that the worst was still coming. I was discriminated by my own family and I was hurting.

At the time I was attending support groups which helped me to recover from the stress and the depression. In 2006 the father of my second born child passed away.

In 2012, I was raped. I never reported the crime because I felt like it was my fault. It was my secret, even though the secret was killing me inside.

In 2013 I fell pregnant again and the father was once more was not interested, again I found myself alone, but we managed to pull through once more. I started dating other women and some of my family and friends did not approve of my relationship with other women.

To all the people out there, do not discriminate of their HIV status.

Let us have the spirit of Ubuntu. Let other people live their lives the way they want to live them.

To all the women who have walked the road that I have walked, do not be bothered God is with us. Be courageous.

To all the men out there who rape women, Stop abusing and raping us!

What is it that we did wrong to deserve this punishment?

Lastly,

I am not HIV

I am living with HIV

I am not the virus, the virus lives in me

I am not defined by HIV, I define HIV.

Girlie Jam-Jam

Sexual violence explained

Sexual violence, including sexual assault, marital rape, compelled rape (when two people are forced to have sex by a third person or persons), corrective rape (the rape of gays and lesbians), is structural violence. Structural violence refers to the systematic ways in which social structures (the political, cultural and economic systems, religion, family, etc.) harm or disadvantage individuals or groups¹. Sexual violence, as we will explain below, results from structural factors.

At the outset it is important to dispel the racist stereotype about black men's sexuality, that black men are inherently sexual predators. This stereotype is perhaps unintentionally being sustained by the overemphasis on black men in discussion on sexual violence. Mmatshilo Motsei indicates:

...the notion of black men as rapist is based on a racist view of black men as sex maniacs derived from biological and sociological stereotypes coined by a range of theorists and scientists. By 'peeping' into the lives of black men in the ghetto, observing their behavior like a scientist studying a group of chimpanzees in a cage, some of these scientists reduced their subjective observations to biological make-up and/or environmental effects².

Pumla Dineo Gqola indicates that the slavery system (a system in which black people were owned by white men) produced black women's fear of violence, because black women were treated as the property of their white slave masters. The white slave masters thus controlled the bodies of their female slaves. It means that black women could not say no to being raped by their white slave masters³. She points out that the colonialists used to rape black women to celebrate their conquests⁴.

Elizabeth Ellen Long indicates that the white supremacist legal system, during racial segregation in South Africa and the United States of America, allowed white men to rape black women with impunity while black men were murdered⁵. Sexual violence was thus used to enforce white supremacy. White supremacy promotes the idea that white people are racially superior to others in society. The racial superiority of white people is obtained from the cultural, social and economic privileges that the majority of them enjoy over the majority of black people.

Sexual violence is rooted in patriarchy. Patriarchy is a social system in which men have power over women. Men are the main authority in the home, men have more leadership power in public, men have more moral power, and men are the main owners of property. Many men use physical, emotional

¹Burtle, Adam n.d. Structural Violence. Available at <http://www.structuralviolence.org/structural-violence/>.

²Motsei, Mmatshilo 2007. The Kanga and the Kangaroo Court. Reflections on the rape trial of Jacob Zuma.

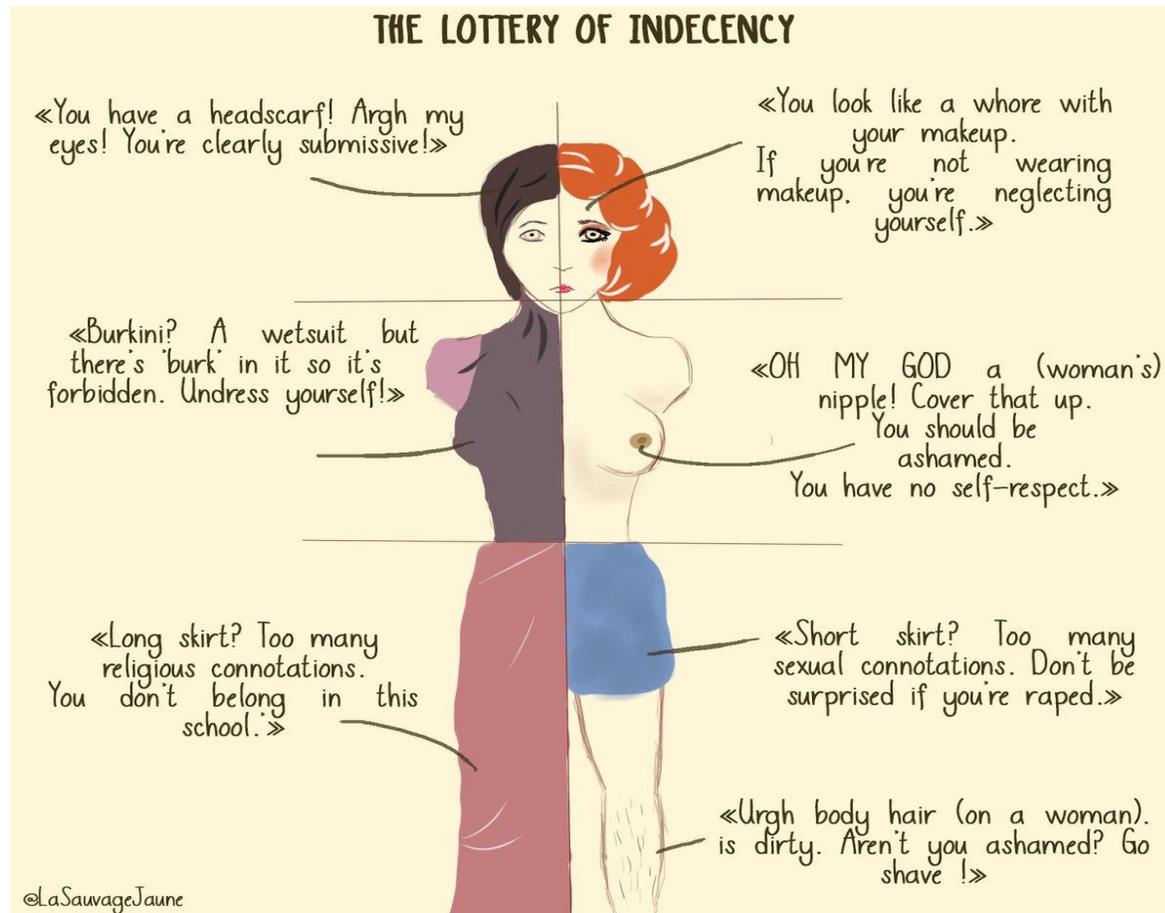
³Thlabi, Redi 2015. Prof Pumla Dineo Gqola on rape culture, patriarchy and gender politics in S.A. Radio 702, The Redi Thlabi Show. Available at: <http://www.702.co.za/articles/5366/prof-pumla-dineo-gqola-on-rape-culture-patriarchy-and-gender-politics-in-sa>.

⁴Thlabi, Redi 2015. Prof Pumla Dineo Gqola on rape culture, patriarchy and gender politics in S.A. Radio 702, The Redi Thlabi Show. Available at: <http://www.702.co.za/articles/5366/prof-pumla-dineo-gqola-on-rape-culture-patriarchy-and-gender-politics-in-sa>.

⁵Long, Elizabeth Ellen 2015. "Rape and Racism: How Claims of Sexual Assault in Colonial Societies Were Used as a Mask for White Supremacy." Available at: http://www.academia.edu/18556250/Rape_and_Racism_How_Claims_of_Sexual_Assault_in_Colonial_Societies_Were_Used_as_a_Mask_for_White_Supremacy.

and psychological violence to maintain their patriarchal power. The socialization of boys and girls into patriarchal gender roles enables or justifies sexual violence against women.

Girls and women are expected to be weak, child bearers, caring and emotionally expressive. They are also expected to regulate and discipline their own bodies in relation to the dominant norms prescribed by their society. Society thus leaves girls and women with no power to control their bodies and social lives. Mmatshilo Motsei indicates that rape denies women the independence to control their bodies⁶. Pumla Dineo Gqola argues that patriarchy devalues women⁷, which leads many women to internalize male dominance, and to blame themselves for violence that is visited upon their bodies. Moreover, women are often berated by family members, friends and/or neighbors when they exit from abusive marriages.



Boys and men, on the other hand, are expected to be strong, providers, protectors and leaders. They are also expected to repress their emotions. It is for this reason that Bell Hooks believes that while boys and men are beneficiaries of patriarchy, they are also victims of the system. She says that society indoctrinates boys and men “into the rules of patriarchy, we force them to feel pain and to deny their feelings.”⁸As a result, men often use violence to maintain their dominance or superiority. Bell Hooks

⁶Motsei, Mmatshilo 2007. The Kanga and the Kangaroo Court. Reflections on the rape trial of Jacob Zuma.

⁷Thlabi, Redi 2015. Prof Pumla Dineo Gqola on rape culture, patriarchy and gender politics in S.A. Radio 702, The Redi Thlabi Show. Available at: <http://www.702.co.za/articles/5366/prof-pumla-dineo-gqola-on-rape-culture-patriarchy-and-gender-politics-in-sa>.

⁸Source: Hooks, Bell n.d. Understanding Patriarchy. Available at <http://imagineborders.org/pdf/zines/UnderstandingPatriarchy.pdf>.

believes that “patriarchy requires male dominance by any means necessary...” It therefore “supports, promotes, and condones sexist violence”⁹ (or violence against women).

Culture and religion, as Lebo Hlaha points out in her story, are structural barriers to uprooting sexual violence. They are being manipulated to perpetuate male dominance. A review of gender-based violence in South Africa conducted by the Study of Violence and Reconciliation, for example, notes:

Some men misconstrue the payment of *lobola* as their right to control and treat their partner as their property ... Payment of *lobola* is seen as entitlement to punish women who are not subservient to their husbands¹⁰.

Lobola (the cash or kind that a prospective husband or head of his family undertakes to give to his prospective wife’s family in consideration for a customary marriage) can thus be used to justify sexual violence against women.

Similarly, Xolelwa Mshubeki indicates that the bible is often used to justify women’s inferiority or subordination to men¹¹. Nontando Hadebe indicates that wives are required to be obedient to their husbands as this is apparently “God’s will for them”¹². She notes that “theologies of suffering” justify “abuse and violence in relationships in the belief that women are called to suffer like Christ who did not respond to those inflicting violence on him”¹³. It is important to note that the bible is also being used to condemn gender non-conformity and therefore could also be used to justify corrective rape of gays and lesbians. Nontando calls for a “Liberating theology” that promotes social justice, equality and dignity for all human beings¹⁴.

Furthermore, the patriarchal character of the criminal justice system is another key structural barrier to uprooting sexual violence against women. The burden of believability is placed on the survivor, who is often subjected to various “why” questions. Mmatshilo Motsei indicates that a rape survivor “has to show that she is not of loose moral character otherwise her case will be disadvantaged by past sexual experiences which may have no bearing on her current claim”¹⁵. Society expects women to fight back when they are raped. Their bodies are expected to be bruised and tormented. In addition, as Pumla Dineo Gqola indicates, sex workers are perceived as unrapable. She argues that what society fails to see is that rape is not sex, but violence¹⁶.

Dee Smythe notes:

⁹Source: Hooks, Bell n.d. Understanding Patriarchy. Available at <http://imagineborders.org/pdf/zines/UnderstandingPatriarchy.pdf>.

¹⁰Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation 2016. Gender-based Violence (GBV) in South Africa: A Brief Review. Available at: <http://www.csvr.org.za/index.php/publications/2657-gender-based-violence-gbv-in-south-africa-a-brief-review.html>.

¹¹Mshubeki, Xolelwa 2015. Report of the Gender-based Violence Seminar “The Role of Christianity in Addressing Gender-based Violence”. Mabungubwe Hotel, Johannesburg, 14 October.

¹²Mshubeki, Xolelwa 2015. Report of the Gender-based Violence Seminar “The Role of Christianity in Addressing Gender-based Violence”. Mabungubwe Hotel, Johannesburg, 14 October.

¹³Mshubeki, Xolelwa 2015. Report of the Gender-based Violence Seminar “The Role of Christianity in Addressing Gender-based Violence”. Mabungubwe Hotel, Johannesburg, 14 October.

¹⁴Mshubeki, Xolelwa 2015. Report of the Gender-based Violence Seminar “The Role of Christianity in Addressing Gender-based Violence”. Mabungubwe Hotel, Johannesburg, 14 October.

¹⁵Motsei, Mmatshilo 2007. The Kanga and the Kangaroo Court. Reflections on the rape trial of Jacob Zuma.

¹⁶Tlhabi, Redi 2015. Prof Pumla Dineo Gqola on rape culture, patriarchy and gender politics in S.A. Radio 702, The Redi Tlhabi Show. Available at: <http://www.702.co.za/articles/5366/prof-pumla-dineo-gqola-on-rape-culture-patriarchy-and-gender-politics-in-sa>.

Complainants who are perceived to have precipitated their own victimization, whether through their conduct or their relationship to the perpetrator, are at a particular disadvantage ... Being drunk (or accepting a drink from the alleged perpetrator), hitchhiking, flirting or selling sex all diminish a complainant's credibility and the validity of her claim on the criminal justice system, even where there is evidence that the accompanying sexual acts were coerced¹⁷.

It is thus fair to suggest that the criminal justice system in how it deals with survivors of sexual violence perhaps unintentionally reinforces patriarchal values and beliefs about gender and women's sexuality.

What is to be Done?

Men need to acknowledge that all men have the capacity to visit sexual violence upon women's bodies. The distinction between so-called 'real men', who apparently don't rape, and not so real men, as Pumla Dineo Gqola points out, is unhelpful. It seeks to absolve some men of taking responsibility for patriarchy. An acceptance by men that all men are beneficiaries of patriarchal power should be the starting point. It is thus the responsibility of all men to speak out against sexual violence against women and girls and to work with women to dismantle patriarchy. Men need to realize that patriarchy has a negative impact on their gender. Patriarchal masculinity robs men of humanity, as many of the stories presented above suggest, as it is driven by the desire and will to dominate and control women and girls. It encourages men to treat women as sexual conquests, and forces them to suppress their emotions. Men thus need to come together and construct alternative anti-sexist and anti-misogynistic masculinities.

We need to build solidarity among women across different spatial settings (urban and rural), while acknowledging that women don't experience patriarchal oppression in the same way. In addition, organization and movement building among women remain critical.

However, it is also important that we move the discussion about patriarchy and sexual violence beyond the two gender system. We need to recognize and engage with the different ways in which patriarchy impinge on other gender identities. By failing to do this we are reinforcing the narrow heteronormative gender political narrative.

Finally, we need police stations that are a survivor friendly environment, and we need much better enforcement of the laws designed to protect the vulnerable against sexual violence.

¹⁷Smythe, Dee 2016. Rape in South Africa: Why the system is failing women. Available at: www.timeslive.co.za/local/2016/02/19/Rape-in-South-Africa-why-the-system-is-failing-women.

Domestic Violence Act	The Act protects survivors of sexual violence from sexual abuse. Domestic violence includes physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional, verbal and psychological abuse, economic abuse, intimidation, harassment, stalking, damage of property and entering a complainant's property without consent.
Criminal Law (Sexual Offences and Related Matters) Amendment Act 2007	The Act, inter alia, deals with all forms of sexual penetration without consent, irrespective of gender. It criminalizes certain sexual conduct. It protects children and persons who are mentally disabled against sexual violence and provides certain services to survivors of sexual violence.
Children's Act 2005	The Act provides care and protection to children. It defines the rights and responsibilities of parents. It regulates the establishment of places of safety, orphanages and the rights of orphans and sets out the laws for their adoption. It also provides for the contribution of certain people towards maintenance.
Children's Amendment Act 2007	The Act makes provisions, inter alia, for early childhood development, the protection of children, children in alternative care and child and youth care centres and drop-in-centres.

THEOLOGY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

The objective of the Theology and Social Justice Programme is to bring church leaders, church organizations and ecumenical activists into solidarity with the struggles of workers, poor communities and vulnerable groups. Through this programme, ESSET provides capacity-building support to church leaders and ecumenical activists in three provinces of South Africa, namely, Gauteng, Eastern Cape and Limpopo. Our interventions aim to foster solidarity among churches with the social struggles of the poor and vulnerable.

COMMUNITY-DRIVEN DEVELOPMENT

The objective of the Community-driven Development Programme is to increase community participation in local governance, to support struggles for social change in poor communities, and to mobilize men and women against gender-based violence. Through this programme, ESSET provides capacity-building support to youth formations in Maila Mapitsane and Johannesburg. The programme also provides a platform for building solidarity among community-based organizations and social movements. Our interventions aim to organize and mobilize the youth for social change, and to organize and mobilize women and men to challenge gender-based violence.

INFORMAL TRADE

The objective of the Informal Trade Programme is to improve the livelihoods of informal traders, especially women informal traders, and to increase political consciousness concerning the intersection of gender, class and racial inequalities among informal traders. Through this programme, ESSET provides capacity-building, research, advocacy and lobbying support to informal traders in five SADC countries, namely, South Africa, Zimbabwe, Lesotho, Swaziland and Zambia. Our interventions aim to create an enabling, gender-sensitive environment for informal traders, especially women informal traders, to engage in economic activity in order to protect their livelihoods.



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