Feminist Africa 14
Rethinking Gender and Violence

Issue 14: December 2010

Feminist Africa is a scholarly journal accredited by the South African Department of Education.

Editorial policy

Feminist Africa is guided by a profound commitment to transforming gender hierarchies in Africa, and seeks to redress injustice and inequality in its content and design, and by its open-access and continentally-targeted distribution strategy. *Feminist Africa* targets gender researchers, students, educators, women's organisations and feminist activists throughout Africa. It works to develop a feminist intellectual community by promoting and enhancing African women's intellectual work. To overcome the access and distribution challenges facing conventional academic publications, *Feminist Africa* deploys a dual dissemination strategy, using the Internet as a key tool for knowledge-sharing and communication, while making hard copies available to those based at African institutions.

Two issues are produced per annum, in accordance with themes specified in the calls for contributions.

The editorial team can be contacted at agi-feministafrica@uct.ac.za

Acknowledgements

Disclaimer

Editor

Issue 14 Editor

Editorial team

Editorial advisory group

Manuscript submissions

Feminist Africa has a submissions policy determined by the continental focus and capacity-building aims of the African Gender Institute's "Gender and Women's Studies in Africa" project. Periodic calls for contributions along particular themes should guide submissions. All contributions must register the centrality of gender analysis and politics to past, present and ongoing processes of social, political and cultural change in Africa. We regret that we cannot respond to all unsolicited submissions.

Please submit contributions electronically to agi-feministafrica@uct.ac.za. We regret that we do not have the capacity to consider contributions in languages other than English.

All submissions to *Feminist Africa* must use the FA style sheet, and should not include graphics.

Feature articles should not exceed 6 500 words. Other contributions should not exceed 2 000 words.

Editorial procedure

Contributions submitted to *Feminist Africa* are considered by the editorial team. Feature articles are peer-reviewed by readers with expertise in relevant areas. Editorial discretion in relation to submitted work resides with the editorial team.

Copyright and reproduction

Distribution

Adams Campus Bookshop
University of KwaZulu-Natal
Howard College Campus
Durban, South Africa
tel: 27 31 261 2320
fax: 27 31 261 6053
email: campus@adamsbooks.co.za

Clarke's Bookshop
211 Long Street
Cape Town 8001
South Africa
tel: 27 21 423 5739
fax: 27 21 423 6441
email: books@clarkesbooks.co.za
web: www.clarkesbooks.co.za

International Subscriptions

EBSCO Subscription Services
P O Box 749
Cresta 2118
South Africa
tel: 27 11 678 4416
fax: 27 11 678 4464
email: mailsa@ebsco.com
web: www.ebsco.com/home/southafrica

Contents

Profiles

Review

Contributors

Editorial:
Rethinking Gender and Violence

Jane Bennett, African Gender Institute,
University of Cape Town

So what is there to rethink?

In the final chapter of his book, *Identity and Violence: the Illusion of Destiny,* Amartya Sen writes of his encounter as an eleven-year boy with a dying man, at his home's gates. The man's name, he tells us, was Kader Mia and his murder was one of thousands and thousands in the Hindu-Muslim riots of the 1940's in Bengal. The chapter concludes the book's engagement with the way in which identities are implicated in violence, and the final sentence strikes home like an arrow: "We have to make sure, above all, that our mind is not halved by a horizon" (Sen, 2006: 186).

The horizon has appeared earlier in the chapter, where Sen is drawing upon a line of Derek Walcott's poetry, to suggest that Walcott's rich and "integrated understanding of the Caribbean" depends on the focus of a poet's gaze, and the ability to let dichotomization dissolve as possibilities unfurl (Sen, 2006:185). The challenge of Sen's gentle injunction to feminists working against violence, especially sexual violence, is both breath-taking and troubling. As those who have been at the forefront, in different ways, of an insistence that gendered embodiment is a political process, and has imprisoned, tortured, and wounded millions of people gendered as women/girls, the notion of a clear line between "right" and "wrong", "innocence" and "perpetration", "pain" and "dominance", "woman" and "man" is a compelling one. Such a line (a "horizon") offers a straightforward way of reading the relationship between gender and violence: becoming gendered ritualizes violence, predicting who will violate and who will be violated, seeking context merely as a backdrop to what we know.

There's a lot of empirical evidence for the assertion that this "horizon", the line which establishes where we are when it comes to understanding gender and violence, is stable. Almost all forms of rape, domestic assassination and

brutality, sexual harassment, trafficking, and sexual abuse of children are carried out by people gendered as "men". Thinking through the connection between gender and violence has to entail a distinction, a line, between "the doers" and the "done to". What is there beyond that?

And yet. *"We have to make sure, above all, that our mind is not halved by a horizon".* Sen himself does not, in the book concluded by this sentence, take up the question of gender as an identity. But the invitation to imagine a future without a dependence on dichotomized zones of being is irresistible. And the hint that minds dependent on a dichotomy for vision are minds "halved" is troubling (it took us all a long time to even get the notion that "women hold up half the sky" into print!) and probably truthful.

The almost intractable conundrum remains nonetheless. In the histories we have access to, it is only the men of the southern Tuareg (see Sadiqi, in this issue) who are banished by one another for rape; in so many other, diverse, settings, we are witness to an unbearable relationship between becoming gendered as a "man" and violence, including violence targeted at women and girls.

How do we think "beyond" this reality? How do we rethink relationships between gender and violence so that we are neither deaf to what it is that is experienced, within different African contexts, nor reified into caricatures of agency, hollow at the core with grief, brittle and full of projective rage at the skin? How do we think about Western images of the "victimized African woman, ravaged by war, to be pitied and developed" while listening to the stories of African-based women (perhaps in Liberia, or northern Uganda), whose lives have been radically violated by conflict and war-mongerers? How do we reflect upon the sexual assault of men and boys in carceral settings? How have discourses of gender and sexualities become so contaminated by assumptions about African women's (in the homogenized plural) normalization of patriarchal and neo-capitalist violences, our[1] attendant sexual passivity, lack of sexual knowledges, disinterest in sexual pleasure, inability to distinguish between sexual transaction and violence, and about our ignorance of our sexual powers? What do we learn about the relationship between gender and violence from transgender activism? When Prime Minister Raila Odinga of Kenya "recalls" his suggestion that Kenyan gay and lesbian people should be arrested, do we laugh or cry?

In the past decade, African feminist activism and theory has been fully engaged with a host of discussions raising questions about gender

and violence. Recently, an escalation of state-sponsored homophobia has cascaded through African governments (Kenya, the Gambia, Nigeria, the DRC, Uganda) and included the African Union's rejection of the Coalition of African Lesbians' application for observer status[2]. In countries in which hate crime against lesbian, gay and transgendered people is reported (such as South Africa), there are frequent reports of terrorization, murder, and rape[3]. While there is nothing new about public – and private – homophobia, the hysteria accompanying contemporary religious and politicians' discourses suggests alarming state fragilities, and increasing levels of ideological corruption in the fight for constituencies and status (hence, resources). Open organization against homophobia and trans-hatred is however still new, especially in East and West Africa, and raises questions about gender and violence which, at first glance, may seem shaped differently from those which understand "women" as vulnerable to "men's" violence.

At the same time, other discourses on gender and violence have arisen from a focus on militarism and conflict. The International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda in 1998 made the decision that mass-rape and sexual mutilation were deployed systematically as weapons during the genocide period, and reporters, women peace activists, and researchers have all documented sexual brutality – of different kinds – as legitimated military activities in the DRC, northern Uganda, and the Sudan. What can be claimed as "new" here is the level of condemnation and publicization of this form of military violence. In an era in which feminist politics have insisted on the relevance of women's experience and where a post 9/11 global dynamic has centralized questions of "terror" and "peace" into mainstream news, the link between the dynamics of gender and violence has become interpolated into debate on African conflict zones. While this has nourished new waves of feminist activism[4], in different contexts, it has simultaneously generated vocabularies on "women", "conflict", "violence", "healing" and "damage" which tend to circulate fairly far away from the conversations of those running shelters for battered women, or advocating for legal reform around marital rape.

And those running shelters for battered women and advocating for legal reform around marital rape (and access to property on widowhood, and post-exposure prophylaxis, and treatment for HIV) are still doing exactly that, in their thousands of thousands across the continent. As conversations about gender and violence have grown to encompasses questions of masculinities, ideas about counter-heteronormativity, demands for the recognition of

militarism as gendered and dangerous, and questions about sexual pleasure and health, the old wrestles around rape, domestic assault, child sexual abuse, misogynist cultural and religious surveillance, the commodification of women's sexual bodies, and sexual harassment have not abated. They have, if anything, become more intense, and embedded in ever-more challenging scenarios: the rape of babies; the devastation of HIV, transmitted through marital infidelity; enforced teenage pregnancy in contexts of great poverty; ritualized gang-rape embedded in drug abuse. In the Saartjie Baartman Centre for Women and Children, in Cape Town (profiled in this issue), there is both a shelter for abused women and children and the only NGO in Africa which fights for the rights of transgender people (GenderDynamiX).

How are we all getting on, side by side?

This issue of *Feminist Africa* seeks to take stock, as it were, of some contemporary thinking on gender and violence. The four feature articles tackle both "old" and "newer" questions: while Fatima Sadiqi's (of the University of Morocco) piece offers descriptive clarity on North Africa's current situation in terms of tackling domestic violence, Eva Ayiera (Urgent Action Fund, Kenya) critiques international discourses on "conflict" and "gender". Anu Pillay, who has just been offered a second term as Head of Mission by Medica Mondial in Liberia, writes about her feminist activism in different areas of gender/violence work as the living theorization of process, and participation, showing how differently focussed work can draw from core principles of feminist epistemology. Jane Bennett's article is interested in the range of theoretical approaches to violence and gender dynamics in African feminist work, especially contemporary approaches to *lgbti*[5] strategic thinking, and while the article offers no easy resolution of their different orientations, celebrates their vigour and rebellions.

The feature articles are intended, as a small group, to suggest that while there may be areas of overlap among writers and activists who take gender and violence seriously, there are myriad points of divergence and plenty of marginalized arguments, seeking entrance. One of these is articulated in Adelene Africa's (AGI, University of Cape Town) Standpoint piece on "Murderous Women", where she asks us to think critically about women as capable of violence and as people too long constructed simply as "mad", "bad" or "sad" if they deploy aggression or organize violent action against others.

The two In Conversation pieces continue the issue's interest in less

dominant discourses around gender and violence. Godwin Murunga (University of Kenyatta) tackles the dialogue between African feminist theories and masculinities with energy and engages directly with the question of violence. His argument rejects simple dichotomies of "men-as-violent/women-as-targets" , stressing the damage done to men and boys by militarization and what he terms "flawed processes of socialization". The juxtaposition of Pauline Dempers' (Breaking the Wall of Silence, Namibia) less formal talk with Yaliwe Clarke (AGI, University of Cape Town) with Murunga's words is striking. Dempers' story of incarceration, sexual harassment, and gendered brutality at the hands of SWAPO, during the Namibian war of liberation, chimes against Murunga's confidence in transformational gender dynamics, and leaves the reader longing for a conversation *between* Dempers and Murunga, between powerful optimism and equally powerful memory.

The limits of a journal-length have determined the choice of themes to be explored in this issue. As editor, this has left me with some uneasy moments. In the c21, there are more ideas on gender and violence than can be enfolded into a triangle of debates ("violence against women", "gender, conflict, and peace-building", "counter-heteronormative activisms"). There are very serious discussions around sustainable livelihoods, the security of the environment, and the role of multi-national corporations in fuelling the military business which depends so heavily on conventional gender norms[6]. Simultaneously, the relationship between gender dynamics and violence approached through feminist ICT-based campaigns, such as Take back the Tech, relies both on conventional feminist notions of gender (seeing "women-people" as being more vulnerable to technological disempowerment than "men-people") and on radical rethinking about how digital strength can dismantle gendered norms of agency. The media, overall, deserves its own space when it comes to contemporary African-based theorizations of gender, sexualities and violence. *Feminist Africa* intends to dedicate an issue in the near future to this.

Despite the thematic gaps, however, this issue draws together voices not exactly in harmony, but certainly in mutual commitment to writing which pulls no discursive punches in terms of its conviction that the relationship between gender and violence is far from fully understood, and even further from a logic in whose terms that same relationship can be erased. The possibility of that erasure is nonetheless never far from our minds. Learned hopefulness (a characteristic, we are told, of Battered Women's Syndrome)? Or a mind refusing to be halved by a horizon?

References

Sen, A. 2006. *Identity and Violence:The Illusion of Destiny* London: Penguin Books

Endnotes

1. I use the pronoun "our" not out of entitlement (a white feminist writer's unproblematized claim to African identity would be stupid) but out of a sense of co-location within these discourses of diminishment.

2. See Pambazauka News 506, for a special issue on this decision *www.pambazuka. org*

3. The latest in the main news-streams of South Africa is that of Ncumisa Mzamelo, who lived in Kwazulu/Natal, South Africa, openly lesbian. Her charred body was found in a public toilet (The Star, December 2nd, Johannesburg).

4. Such as the work of Femmes Africa Solidarite, ISIS-WICCE Uganda, and Women of Zimbabwe Arise (WOZA).

5. The *lgbti* acronym is unsatisfactory in its symbolic homogenization of very diverse oppressions and experiences; it is nonetheless accepted as a temporary (or not) 'gloss' in many African activist circles for counter-heteronormative struggles for identities, rights, safety, and resources.

6. See, for example, *www. gwsafrica.org*: "Position Paper on Gender and Violence". This was written by Felix Liersch, in 2009.

Sexual violence in conflict:
A problematic international discourse

Eve Ayiera, Urgent Action Fund, Nairobi

Between 30th July and 2nd August 2010, reports from the United Nations (UN) and International non-government organisations (INGOs) exposed a mass rape campaign carried out in Walikale, North Kivu Province of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) in which more than 157 women and men were victimised. Three rebel groups, and possibly with support from the Government's 212th Brigade stationed in the area, are believed to be behind the orchestrated orgy of violence in Walikale, where they moved through a dozen villages in a rape and pillage campaign.[1] The UN immediately issued a statement strongly condemning the violence and urged the Congolese government to pursue the perpetrators and bring them to book (UN News Centre, August 2010). In a televised press conference (UNTV 2010) Margot Wallström, the UN Special Representative of the Secretary General on Sexual Violence in Conflict said,

> "The recent atrocities in Walikale, North Kivu in the DRC affirm that sexual violence should never again be dismissed as random, cultural or inevitable. ...We must hold the perpetrators to account. The illegal armed groups that continue to rape as a weapon of war must be brought to justice... and secondly we must improve the United Nations' response..."

The incident takes place in the wake of an International Criminal Court (ICC) that is actively pursuing suspected perpetrators of war crimes and crimes against humanity, and bringing them before the court to face international justice. In fact, just three years earlier, Germain Katanga and Mathieu Ngudjolo, Congolese rebel leaders, had been indicted and by the time of this mass rape incident, they were facing criminal prosecution crimes, including rape and sexual slavery. At the same time, there has been sustained international focus on the situation of conflict in DRC, particularly on the pervasive problem of sexual violence.

The supranarrative rehashes the rhetoric on the failure of legal accountability for sexual violence in DRC that allows such "widespread and systematic" violence to continue unabated during conflict. Even so, the UN account of the incident (UN News Centre 2010) does not speculate on the reason or the purpose of this 'systematic' operation of violence. The subterranean account hints at an intention by the rebel groups to deter a swop by the government of the 212 Brigade that has been in the region for a while, with the 211 Brigade. This is because the 212 Brigade had worked out a lucrative collusion with the rebel groups that saw all sides benefit from export of tin and the mineral taxes generated in the region. The change with the 211 Brigade threatened this profitable alliance (Stearns, 2010). The mass rape was an easy tool to create chaos, assert dominance and territorial control, while also generating international attention.

This incident illustrates a tension between the theoretical conceptualisation of sexual violence in conflict situations, and the reality of sexual violence. Despite a strong global dialogue on sexual violence in conflict situations, the international community seems helpless to stop sexual violence in conflict. Is the problem in how sexual violence in conflict is conceptualised and therefore addressed, or is sexual violence so entrenched that it requires a immense and sustained legal, policy and diplomatic effort to end it? My argument in this paper is that sexual violence remains intractable primarily because of how the problem is conceptualised and thus the approaches to a solution programmed around it.

Awakening to the scale of sexual violence armed conflicts

Sexual violence in conflict – a footnote

Sexual violence in conflict is as old as the history of humanity. Women and girls have been the predominant victims of sexual violence, and there has been a measure of acceptance that rape goes hand in hand with the violence of warfare. In addition to looting and pillaging, rape of women and girls of the opposing sides was among the spoils of war. Although recognized as a social vice, it was treated as a reward for war weary warriors who were otherwise intensely engaged in securing the interests of the side for which they took up arms. As such, to reprimand a soldier for sexual assault during combat was the proverbial "storm in a teacup." Skjelsbæk (2010) reiterates that looting and rape were "two sides of the same coin".

The four conventions that constitute the Geneva Convention of 1949 are considered an early breakthrough in codifying as well as setting standards on the conduct of war. However, it did not include sexual violence as a prohibited crime against civilians during war. Article 3, which is common to all four conventions, declares "violence to life and person, in particular murder of all kinds, mutilation, cruel treatment and torture" and "outrages upon personal dignity, in particular humiliating and degrading treatment" as war crimes. Article 27 of the Fourth Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War named rape of women as a reprehensible act but stopped short of making it a war crime for which combatants could be held to account:

> "Women shall be especially protected against any attack on their honour, in particular against rape, enforced prostitution, or any form of indecent assault."

The wording in the Geneva Convention codified the prevalent social attitudes towards sexual violation of females: it was an act of dishonour against the victim but also against the dominant male in her life – her husband or her father. Her legacy of shame and worse yet, if she conceived out of the incident, made her less marriageable. Rape was a dishonourable act but it was not considered of sufficient import to merit political consideration or mention in the negotiations for peace, reparations and post conflict reconstruction. The de facto acquiescence over centuries to sexual violence as part and parcel of warfare has been dubbed "one of the greatest conspiracies of silence."[2]

From footnote to first page

A fortuitous convergence of rights activists' spirited campaigns on sexual violence and the global outrage on the extensive and calculated use of rape for ethnic cleansing in the Bosnia armed conflict of 1992 brought sexual violence out of the obscurity of postscripts, and onto the first page agenda of international discussions. When it broke in the media that in Srebrenica, the Serbian forces had set up camps where they held and raped non-Serbian women and girls, impregnated them and sent them out to bear the children conceived, there was global outrage particularly in the Global North.[3] At the same time, the genocide unfolding in Rwanda a few years later and the extent of sexual violence and murder that characterised the conflict fuelled a global demand to end the inaction on sexual violence in armed conflicts.

After the Bosnia crisis, the UN was "actively seized" by the problem of sexual violence in armed conflict. What followed was a strong rhetoric and the steady outpouring of international standard-setting documents, including resolutions, declarations, statements, policies, treaties, communiqués and several other instruments all speaking to sexual violence, making it a global problem, defining solution and demanding actions to end the pandemic. Experts, commentators and UN agencies have theorised extensively on sexual violence in conflict, and the global discourse on sexual violence has developed a language of its own. The robust international discourse has overshadowed and shaped the national responses of NGOs as well as governments.

The 1993 Statute of the International Criminal Tribunal in Yugoslavia (ICTY) and the 1994 Statute of the International Criminal Tribunal in Rwanda (ICTR) were the first documents to name mass rape unequivocally as a crime against humanity. The Statute of the ICTR not only acknowledged rape, but also named forced prostitution and indecent assaults as crimes against humanity.[4] The commitment of the ICTR was backed by the first-ever conviction of a war crime suspect, Jean-Paul Akayesu, in 1998, for rape as a crime against humanity and an act of genocide. Thereafter, the Statute establishing the International Criminal Court (Statute of the ICC) in 1998 picked the cue and included rape as a war crime, prosecutable alongside other crimes against humanity and genocide in the permanent count for international criminal justice.

Activists and UN agencies have generated numerous training manuals to sensitise soldiers to the problem of sexual violence in conflict situations and impress upon them the appropriate conduct that offers protection for the victims. Internal policy guidelines have also emerged from a theorising that women and girls are more at risk for sexual violence and sexual exploitation in conflict and humanitarian situations, and the guidelines seek to protect the vulnerable groups from such conduct. The responses of rights groups have also been patterned along the UN response, with intense advocacy and lobbying for legal reform, for national military personnel to be trained on responding to sexual violence in conflict, as well as seeking reparations for victims who have suffered sexual violence during conflict. Predominantly, the discourse which has informed the research, policy work and advocacy, has focused on exposing the vice, demanding justice for victims, offering protection and recovery support for the victims, and wielding international political will to condemn sexual violence in conflict situations. The research and theorising

have also generated a phraseology that seeks to employ shock tactics to elicit the impetus to act and address sexual violence. Phrases such as "rape as a weapon of war;" "the war is fought on women's bodies;" "the rape capital of the world;" among others have become a common part of the global language on sexual violence in conflict situations intended to communicate the premeditation and deliberateness of sexual violence and the importance of ending it. Without a doubt, the development of the international discourse on sexual violence has been nothing short of exponential since sexual violence in armed conflicts became a global problem (see Skjelsbæk 2010). Perhaps this is also attributable to an attempt to undo some of the injustice occasioned by decades of silence sexual violence in conflicts.

To the cursory observer, the documentary barrage, the sharp increase in awareness and willingness to talk about sexual violence in conflicts should have, in nearly 20 years of activity, put a stop to sexual violence in conflict or mitigated the high incidence of the crime. The reality, however, is bleaker. Sexual violence has become more complex, more prevalent and more egregious in conflict situations and the current responses have not been effective in deterring or putting a stop to it. The theorizing and international initiatives to combat sexual violence reveal a growing frustration and desperate groping for solutions to a problem that becomes more intractable the more it is "understood". There are dozens of agency and inter-agency actions specifically designed to combat violence in conflict. In addition, there are high profile initiatives including the present UN Secretary General, Ban Ki-moon's initiative, *UNiTE to End Violence against Women.* The *Stop Rape Now! UN Action against Sexual Violence in Conflict* initiative has at its helm prominent performing artists and international personalities; the offices of the Special Rapporteurs and Special Representatives also are focused on violence, among other initiatives. There is no shortage of a demonstrable international will to tackle sexual violence in conflict. However, the theorising on sexual violence seems to have become stuck on breaking the silence. The resounding success of generating international focus on sexual violence by breaking the silence on the atrocity has left the UN and many rights groups in a reverie that constantly seeks to re-enact this success, while erroneously identifying the problem as a failure to acknowledge the incidence of sexual violence. Hence, responses are heavily nuanced with a continuing intention to "create awareness", to "disclose" to "break the silence" on sexual violence. However, like an unsightly wart that will not respond to an onslaught of

antiviral remedies, the problem of sexual violence in conflict situations has remained unyielding to the multiple interventions. By excising sexual violence in conflict situations from its complicating contexts, the international discourse deals with the challenge as if it were an independent phenomenon that emerges because of armed conflict and can therefore be fixed by applying appropriate legal and policy measures to the perpetrators when caught. The international discourse attempts simplify a complex problem and propose simple solutions, without problematising fundamental assumptions and ideologies that underpin the approach to sexual violence.

Problematic conceptions, problematic responses

A normalisation of violence against women

In her analysis of gender, violence and discourse, Shepherd (2010) surmises that the feminisation of sexual violence emanates from conceptual processes hinged on structuralism that asserts sharp binaries in social relations: male versus female, heterosexual versus homosexual, white versus black, and so on. The social roles and attributes that define men and women are diametrically opposed, while what constitutes male and female is essentialised. Masculinity is expressed in aggression, militarisation, assertiveness and power-wielding. Femininity is the direct antithesis and is expressed in weakness, passivity, and yielding to power. This categorisation normalises the notion of women as lacking in agency, and in need of protection from an excessive exercise of male attributes.

This problematic construction of gender and sex is the platform from which the international discussions and responses to sexual violence in conflict launch. The resulting conceptual framework affirms a patriarchal social order which normalises the aggressive, heterosexual, dominant behaviour associated with masculinity and the subjugation of females. Shepherd describes the gender relations in this context as a zero-sum game where only one can win at the expense of the other. Violence against women becomes an integral part of exerting power over women and maintaining a system of male hegemony. Sexual violence is feminised – it happens to women because they are female. The current discourse on sexual violence has been astute in analysing the patterns of sexual violence in conflict, but has failed to interrogate the normalisation of patriarchy as the basis for human interaction.

Patriarchy as a social-political order is based on male hegemony through

dominance and denigration of other experiences. It concentrates power at public and private spheres within the male. "Normal" is defined from the perspective of the heterosexual male and other perspectives are peripheral. The fundamental ideology asserts two genders, women and men, based on two sexes, male and female. Within a patriarchal construct, other sexual identities such as transgender and intersex are discounted. Access to power is based on a hierarchy where male is preferred over female, and extends to other systems of domination including racism, religious hegemony, ethnicity.

Violence is an acceptable and integral part of maintaining this order, insofar as it does not fundamentally threaten the structures. Hence, armed conflict is abhorrent in that it makes societies ungovernable, and threatens entire socio-political orders. Violence against women, on the other hand, is a prominent expression of pattern of domination. It is normalised through assertions of cultural acceptability and desensitisation of communities to all but extreme manifestations of violence. Sexual violence though publicly subject to public censure is an often tolerated expression of masculinity and domination of femininity. Rape in conflict, Skjelsbæk (2010) suggests, is an "[accentuation] of pre-existing gender relations," as opposed to a new phenomenon emerging with the eruption of hostilities.

Although the international responses to conflict do not reveal a keen internalization of these facts, the UN correctly theorises on sexual violence in conflict:

> "Since perpetrators of sexual and gender-based violence are often motivated by a desire for power and domination, rape is common in situations of armed conflict and internal strife. An act of forced sexual behaviour can threaten the victim's life. Like other forms of torture, it is often meant to hurt, control and humiliate, while violating a person's physical and mental integrity." (UNHCR et al. 1999)

The current discourse which embodies the UN and NGO responses to sexual violence in conflict has not problematised the social construction of gender which continues to fuel the evolution of the problem of sexual violence in armed conflicts.

Instead, the approaches continually validate the unequal power structures that were normalised prior to the outbreak of conflict. Not only is feminised violence considered normal, but the international emphasis on the magnitude and extent of sexual violence also suggests that sexual violence against women is noteworthy only when it involves large numbers and egregious acts.

The phraseology emerging around sexual violence in conflict seems to glorify the situation the more extreme it becomes. A bizarre and unspoken competition over which situation is dubbed "the worst humanitarian crisis in the world", or "the most forgotten crisis," seems to be key in generating international attention which is translated to mean support for resolving the situation. This has the inadvertent effect of glorifying the violence. Lewis's (2008b) robust criticism of the UN response to the sexual violence in DRC reveals a frustration with what he describes as all the right rhetoric and public relations pronouncements, but too little action that can trigger change.

Sexual violence in conflict as part of a continuum

Bringing to light the extent, nature and scope of sexual violence that was occurring in armed conflict situations has been one of the most significant breakthroughs in the fight against sexual violence. The decision of the ICC to hold perpetrators accountable for mass rape and egregious forms of sexualised violence has added vim to the fervent efforts of documenting sexual violence in conflict, particularly in Africa where many of the world's armed conflicts continue. Margot Wallström's impassioned remarks on bringing the perpetrators in Walikale, DRC to book, following a four-day spate of sexual violence, emphasises the UN belief in sexual violence in conflict as a separate and unique problem that requires a targeted response (see Ertürk 2008).

Sexual violence in conflict situations is often perceived as a stand alone social problem that arises wholly because of the conflict situation and will naturally die down when peace is restored. The interventions thus focus on mitigating or stopping the problem while the conflict persists until an armistice can be brokered. It is as if sexual violence in conflict has little if any connection with the pre-existing gender relations, social orientation and other forms of gendered violence preceding the descent into conflict. The calls for governments to "pursue the perpetrators and bring them to account,"[5] reveal stark assumptions that the default position is a system that is unwilling to censure such conduct. Further, it assumes that the prosecution of sexual violence in the International Criminal Court is a sufficient deterrent for the violence. The fact that the mass rape happened while top rebel commanders from towns in the same Kivu Province were facing prosecution for rape in the ICC is telling. Perhaps because of the size and nature of matters that come before the ICC, many rebel leaders are aware that they are unlikely to

end up in The Hague facing war crimes charges. However, it is perhaps more likely that the ICC's criminal prosecutions have some deterrent effect but not enough to create a terror of engaging in widespread sexual violence in conflict situations.

Research in conflict situations has revealed that sexual violence during conflicts does indeed escalate both in victim numbers and in scope. Numerous conflict situations have also revealed that sexual violence is wielded to further the ends of the conflict (see Arieff, 2009; Heise et al., 1999). However, the rhetoric takes it further and creates the impression that sexual violence in conflict situations is an isolated phenomenon that arises only with the outbreak of conflict. It separates sexual violence in conflict from the continuum within which a culture of violence breeds, congeals and becomes an intricate part of the social fabric. UN approaches have treated sexual violence in "peacetime" and sexual violence in conflict situations as separate intervention issues. Sexual violence in conflict merits international attention, pronouncements and allocation of international resources towards redressing the problem. Sexual violence during peacetime is easily perceived as the lesser evil.

A silo approach

Not only does the discourse excise sexual violence in conflict from the continuum of sexual violence in peace time, it also excises it from the broader political discussions that take place in resolving conflict. Sexual violence is rarely mentioned during the negotiations to resolve wars. The United Nations Fund for Women (UNIFEM) estimates that of 300 peace agreements from 45 conflicts since the end of the Cold War, only 10 peace processes even mentioned sexual violence, let alone address it as a critical conflict resolution item.[6] This, despite the prompting from four UN Security Council Resolutions,[7] numerous policy guidelines, discussion papers, senior level officials statements, an office of the UN Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women and an office of the Special Representative of the Secretary General on Sexual Violence in Conflict. This lends credence to Lewis's (2008a) assertions that the rhetoric from the UN does not translate into political will to deal with sexual violence.

More importantly, sexual violence in conflict though prominent in international discussions on conflict, is in fact still seen as a side problem to the main problem of the political fallout, the breakdown in law and order,

insecurity and the conduct of war. Rape is a female problem that occasionally happens to unfortunate men, and is addressed as a reproductive health concern. The discourse does not consider rape in the context of national security, rape as a continuation of conflict and rape as an extension of other forms of oppression, including race, religious, ethnic and political (Skjelsbæk 2010). The feminisation of rape and sexual violence in conflict is a political strategy as well as a socio-cultural dynamic with far reaching developmental, social organisational, political structuring and economic implications even after the guns have gone silent.

The UN as a global organisation pursues happy fusion of the multiplicity of cultures, religions and ideologies of states that play out on the international stage. Its policy parlance inevitably reflects this strongly compromising approach in its ideological positions, rhetoric and pronouncements. The organisation is subtly resistant to radical feminist ideologies that threaten the current social order. This is unsurprising because the set up of the UN is as part of an intricate system of maintaining relationships of dominance and subjugation between states. The UN dialogue on sexual violence has highlighted the importance of inclusion of women in peace talks, in decision-making processes. However, this approach does not problematise the fact that the system into which women are to be included is already dysfunctional as a tool for equality in social relations.

Further, the use of phrases such as "taking women's views into account" indicates an acceptance of women on the periphery mitigated by generous calls for opportunities to participate, not as equals where they can question the system, but to have their views included much as one would take into account the opinions of an external party. The discourse, while seeking to shift the balance of power, in fact reiterates that women are on the outside looking in, and are asking for a seat at the table "if it is alright with the boys". Lewis (2008b) reflects that if the scale of sexual violence that women face happened to men, the solutions would have come much sooner, and the UN would not be standing and wringing its hands behind an edifice of policy documents and diplomatic pronouncements.

Reformulating the discourse and the interventions

Sexual violence in conflict situations is a discourse given to clichés and problematic assumptions that the source of the violence. Skjelsbæk's (2010) insightful assessment identifies sexual violence in conflict as an accentuation

of already problematic gender relations before the violence breaks out. The dominant discourse on sexual violence, driven by the international community's extensive theorising on the problem, has made key assumptions that need to be unravelled and if the challenge of sexual violence is to be tackled with any measure of success. I highlight three key problems with the current discourse on sexual violence.

First, the discourse sets off with the presumption that sexual violence in conflict is anomalous to an otherwise functional system, and the fight to stamp out sexual violence in conflict is a fight to intercept this deviation and restore an unproblematic status quo. The discourse is problematic precisely because it fails to problematise the normalisation of violence against femininity, deeming such violence attention-worthy only when it is has a high incidence and is widespread. Without addressing the systems – political, social, cultural, legal, economic – through which sexual violence is feminised and disseminated as an inevitable part of social relations, the intense concentration of efforts on dealing with the problem when it is at a peak will not succeed in addressing the root that gives rise to the problem.

Second, sexual violence during armed conflict is not a unique phenomenon, even though it is often widespread. It is a manifestation of problematic gender relations that are defined in terms of binaries. Within these rigidly defined brackets, sexual violence is in fact the result of a power dynamic that normalises heterosexual masculinity as the collective "objective" and others all other experiences – female, homosexual, transgender. Sexual violence in conflict is not *per se* a "female problem." There are a growing number of sexual violence incidents reported by boys and men, as well as by sexual minority identities. The motivation is key – sexual violence is an assertion of male dominance and a tool of domination, humiliation and of feminisation, where femininity is interpreted as an insult to the male-bodied individuals.

Third, sexual violence is not just a gender problem; it is as much a political, social, economic and legal problem of war. The distinction of "wartime" and "peacetime" as the difference between the continuation and cessation of armed hostilities is myopic at best and is tantamount to accepting violence against a percentage of populations as an acceptable part of peace. There is value in rights groups as well as the UN dialoguing on sexual violence as an active component of war, and for negotiations to consider the continuation of sexual violence as a continuation of war. Peace should have more encompassing definitions, than "the absence of violence" which should give

impetus to addressing sexual violence as part of poor governance, corrupt accountability, and weak social structures.

The theorising and conceptualising on sexual violence in conflict situations sets the tone for the priorities set and the interventions made on sexual violence in conflict. After at least 20 years of active international attention to sexual violence in conflict, the steady increase of the incident should trigger the question "where have we gone wrong?" The answers lie in examining the conceptualisation of sexual violence in conflict.

References

Arieff, A. 2009. "Sexual Violence in African Conflicts". A Congressional Research Service report for Congress. November 25, 2009. Available at www.crs.gov

Buss, D.M. and Malamuth, N. M. *Sex, power, conflict: evolutionary and feminist perspectives*. New York: Oxford University Press

Ertürk, Y. 2008. "Violence against Women: From Victimization to Empowerment" presented at the forum on *Where is the Power in Women's Empowerment*, ESCAP, Bangkok, 4 August 2008.

Gordon, A. 1996. *Transforming Capitalism and Patriarchy; Gender and Development in Africa*. Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publishers

Heise, L, Ellsberg, M. and Gottemoeller, M. 1999. *Population Reports,* Series L, No. 11. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University School of Public Health, Population Information Program, December. Available at <http://info.k4health.org/pr/l11/l11creds.shtml

Heise, L.L. "Violence against Women: Translating International Advocacy into Concrete Change" *American University Law Review*. Vol 44 No.1207 1994-1995

Hussain, R. 2010. "Rape for ethnic cleansing" in *Altmuslimah*. Available at <http://www.altmuslimah.com/a/b/gva/3535/

L. A. Times. 2009. "Rape: It's a war crime." *Los Angeles Times*, 13 August. Available at < http://articles.latimes.com/2009/aug/13/opinion/ed-rape13/2

Lewis, S. 2008. "Congo's rape and sexual violence: UN's delinquency". *Pambazuka* 15 April 2008, Issue 364. Available at <http://pambazuka.org/en/category/feature/47347

Lewis, S. 2008. "Peace is a mere illusion when rape continues." *Pambazuka* 10 September 2008, Issue 395. Available at <http://pambazuka.org/en/category/feature/50445

Moi, T. 2002. *Sexual/textual politics: feminist literary theory*. 2nd ed. New York: Routledge

Scott N.R. 2010. "Rape Warfare: Sexual Violence as a Systematic Weapon of War" in *American Journal of Scientific Research*. No. 9, 2010: 23-29

Seifert, R. 1996. "The second front: The logic of sexual violence in wars" in *Women's Studies International Forum*, Vol. 19, Nos.1-2: 35-43

Sheehy, E. 2008. "Legal responses to violence against women in Canada," in Webber, M. and Bezanson, K. (eds). *Rethinking Society in the 21st Century: critical readings in sociology*. 2nd ed. Ontario: Canadian Scholars Press Inc.

Shepherd, L.J. 2010. "Women, armed conflict and language – Gender, violence and discourse" in *International Review of the Red Cross*. Vol. 92 No. 877 March 2010. Available at <http://www.icrc.org/Web/eng/siteeng0.nsf/htmlall/review-877-p143/$File/irrc-877-shepherd.pdf

Skjelsbæk, I. 2010. "The Elephant in the Room. An Overview of How Sexual Violence came to be seen as a Weapon of War." Report to the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, May 2010. Peace Research Institute Oslo. Available at <http://www.prio.no/upload/people/Inger_Skjelsbaek/Inger%20Skjelsb%C3%A6k%20MFA%20Report%202010.pdf

Stearns, J. 2010. "Mass rape in Walikale: What happened?" reported on <http://congosiasa.blogspot.com/2010/08/mass-rape-in-walikale-what-happened.html

UN News Centre. 2010. "UN voices outrage at mass rape by rebels in eastern DR Congo" *UN News Service* 24 August. Available at <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=35706

UNDAW. 1998. "Sexual Violence and Armed Conflict: United Nations Response". A Women 2000 and Beyond Series publication: United Nations, Division for the Advancement of Women, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. Available at <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/public/W2000andBeyond.html

UNHCR et.al. 1999. "Sexual and Gender-based Violence" in *Reproductive Health in Refugee Situations: An Inter-agency Field Manual*. United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. Available at <http://www.unfpa.org/emergencies/manual/4.htm

UNifeed, (UNTV): UN/WALLSTRÖM, Televised press briefing of Margot Wallström commenting on mass rapes in DRC in August. 31 August 2010. Available on <http://www.unmultimedia.org/tv/unifeed/d/15814.html

UNIFEM. 2010. "Get the Facts: Violence against young women and girls." United Nations Development Fund for Women. Available at <http://www.unifem.org/attachments/events/YoungWomensForumMexico_FactSheet_201008_en.pdf

Ward, J. and Marsh, M. 2006. "Sexual Violence against Women and Girls in War and Its Aftermath: Realities, Responses, and Required Resources." A Briefing Paper prepared for a symposium in Brussels titled *Sexual Violence in Conflict and Beyond,* 21-23 June 2006. Available at <http://www.unfpa.org/emergencies/symposium06/ docs/finalbrusselsbriefingpaper.pdf

Endnotes

1. This is according to Jason Stearns, a Central Africa senior analyst with the International Crisis Group, reported on the "Congo Siasa" blog site. See Stearns 2010.

2. Jan Egeland, the UN Undersecretary General for Humanitarian Affairs from 2003 to 2006 first coined the phrase that has been reiterated by several commentators as an apt depiction of the inaction for centuries that rendered sexual violence in war "invisible" to the international community until the 1990s.

3. See Skjelsbæk, 2010; Arieff, 2009; Heise et al., 1999; UNDAW 1998;

4. See Articles 3 and 4 of the Statute of the International Criminal Tribunal in Rwanda

5. UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon and Margot Wallström issued strongly worded statements to the DRC government to pursue the perpetrators of the rape spree in Walikale. Reported by UN News Centre 2010.

6. UNIFEM gives a 10 point count on the highlights of women in war in light of the 10th anniversary of UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325. Available at <http://www.unifem.org/campaigns/1325plus10/1325-highlights/

7. These include UNSCR 1325 of 2000, UNSCR 1820 of 2008 ; UNSCR 1888 of 2009 and UNSCR1889 of 2009. Available on the UNIFEM website noted above.

"Circles and circles": Notes on African feminist debates around gender and violence in the c21

Jane Bennett, African Gender Institute, University of Cape Town

"When we move, we cause ruptures."
(Patricia McFadden[1])

"That we can be injured, that others can be injured, that we are subject to death at the whim of another, are all reasons for both fear and grief.... If we are interested in arresting cyles of violence to create less violent outcomes, it is no doubt important to ask what, politically, may be made of grief besides a cry for war."
(Judith Butler, preface to *Precarious Life*, 2004)

Introduction

The strategies opened for political activism through mobilization as "women" shift dramatically in different historical, social, economic, and cultural contexts (Geisler, 2004; Razavi and Molyneux, 2002; Ferree and Tripp, 2006). Some analyses of such shifts privilege identity politics as a key resource in understanding differences, tensions, and alliances (so that religious identities, for example, or racialized ones, become central to the theorization of particular activist agendas or initiatives). Others are more interested in the contextual confluence of economic and political realities through which people gendered as "women" find themselves deprived of access to power, material resources, and/or political representation. In the past few years, there have been vibrant, critical discussions on the nature, shape and direction of "women's movement" organizing, and in African contexts, I would suggest there are four overarching debates which have circled continually through intellectual writing on "women's movements", activist organization at several levels, and within numerous fora – workshops, conferences, World Social

Forum tents, small rooms and patches of shade in which planning, arguing, and celebrations have been undertaken (Bennett, 2009).

The first debate concerns the meaning of the state. Although there are, of course, continental contexts in which the concept of a coherent "state" is not useful, there has been over the past four decades, considerable energy vested in the struggle to hold post 'flag-democracy" states accountable to ideals of gender equality in terms of political representation, state-based budget processes, and the delivery of resources and services. Where "states" themselves are however corrupt, fragmented, in rapid transition, or organized through military rule, there has been debate about the value of this work, and its vulnerability to co-optation by interests far from feminist (Mama, 2003).

This debate is interlinked with a second: the meaning of the interaction between the North and diverse initiatives concerned with "women's human rights," "South-based feminisms," and "gender-alert social justice". As Aili Tripp suggests, "The term 'transnational feminism" is sometimes used as shorthand for Western involvement in and influence on feminist movements globally"(Tripp, 2004: 46)[2] and although (as she points out) this shorthand expresses only one dynamic of transnational feminist organizing, it is the dynamic which provokes difficult questions concerning integrity, sustainability, control, and longterm strategy.

The third debate concerns the very existence of a "women's movement" (Essof, 2005). In an era in which WTO policies, the still-ongoing American war on Iraq, and increasing gaps between the world's wealthy and its poor, belie notions of "progress" or "democracy", there has been a powerful escalation of political protest, demanding alternatives. The place of gender justice within these protests, alongside the seeming intransigence of local gender oppressions, has led to serious reflection, analysis, and a desire for new beginnings, new strategies. Some of this discussion has been accompanied by a sense of despair (Chigudu, 2007), challenges to "older feminists" (Wilson, Sengupta, and Evans, 2006), and a search for new alliances. Other voices have approached current political and economic contexts of complex gender injustices with renewed vigour, theoretical analysis which seeks to engage a wide array of local and transnational activists, and strategy which encompasses the streets and the screen. These voices are most visibly located not in research literature, but in the activism and report-production of feminist organizations which deliberately challenge convention about who constitutes the category "women" and what it means to design theory about

the eradication of violence in "women's" lives.

One of these organizations, I would argue, is *Urgent Action*, based in Nairobi, Kenya. Since 2005, the organization has been clear that fighting for the rights of people who identified as (or were targeted by state and local homophobias as) lesbian, gay, transgendered, bisexual and intersexed flowed logically from an overarching commitment to the defence of human rights. More pointedly, targeted anti-homophobic work flowed directly from a long engagement with the meaning of violence and discrimination against women (Kiragu, 2005). This position raises a fourth major debate driving the shapes of conversation within feminist movement-building.

This debate concerns the fact that concerns long animating women's organizing -- access to reproductive health and to freedom from gender-based violence – have become embedded into demands for access to sexual rights. "On the global front, too, it has become clear that in the post-9/11 world, sexual politics – and the morality that underpins dominant discourses on sexuality – can no longer be relegated to the periphery of feminist analysis" (Mama, 2005). The link, however, between gender, culture, and sexuality is so intricate and so deeply naturalized within discourses of nationalism, the family, and – indeed – into *being human*[3] that organizing through recognition of sexuality as a political force demands a conversation about what it is we mean, in 2010, when we link the terms "gender", "sexuality" and "violence".

The proactive defence of counter-heteronormativities, in particular, has both been termed "the true test for human rights defenders" (Kiragu, 2005) and raises an opportunity to explore the range of theoretical conversations which implicate contextual norms of gender and sexualities within economic, state, social, social, systemic, military and/or epistemological violences.

This article seeks to explore, at a theoretical level, the broad trajectories of recent African feminist engagements with ideas about gender and violence, and argues that while there is evidence of "silo-ization" between different approaches to understanding what it means for feminists to strategize against violence, contemporary counter-heteronormative activisms can both benefit from links to differently-focused activism (such as work which confronts militarism) and simultaneously contribute enormously to how we can imagine worlds free of complex misogyny (Pereira, 2003).

The article opens with a section which locates questions about the link between gender and violence within contemporary African feminism within exploration of colonialism and its legacies. The section moves into a brief

survey of theory on what has been conventionally termed "gender-based violence" and highlights some of the debates in this field about the meaning of patriarchy, about the impact of wide-spread feminist activism shaped through NGOs and legal reform work, and about "culture" or "poverty" as explanations for violent misogyny. The following section suggests that these debates are articulated largely in isolation from other zones of writing, such as discussion of the HIV epidemic, work on African masculinities, and particularly recent research and writing about gender and militarism in African contexts, where masculinities are implicated in questions of war-driven violence. The final section asks what knowledges of violence against *lgbti* identities, organizations, and spaces bring to the theorization of gender and violence.

Starting points

The work of theorizing the interaction between gender and violence is bedeviled, globally, by questions of origin. If one of the dynamics deployed most widely by human beings in their social, economic, and political craving for notions of 'being" (routes to the comprehension of life, and others' lives) – *the processes of gender* – can be experienced as thoroughly implicated in torture, murder, cruelty, demonization and human abjection, where does such violence come from? Surely the processes of "becoming social" within African history which are so deeply ingrained into cosmologies, notions of family, and the core business of sexuality and reproduction cannot *of themselves* be organically hospitable to unique forms of violence (the sexual torture of people located as "wives", or peer-bonding exercises among young men which demand the rape of a person gendered as a "girl", the kinds of cruelty which demand "perpetration" from someone gendered as a man and the response of agony and fear from someone gendered as woman)?

In African feminist theory, there has been a tense relationship between ideas about violence which prioritize the processes of colonialism as fundamental to understanding the relationship between gender and violence and ideas about local norms of becoming gendered which may – or may not – have tolerated, or encouraged, abuse of women (in particular contexts) as part and parcel of conventional and contextualized masculinities and femininities. Although it is difficult to generalize, post-colonial writing generally interprets colonialism *as* violence (epistemological, embodied, economic). Research reveals diverse layers of colonial praxis as saturated with hierarchical notions of gender, sexual coercion of women, the inability to respect or understand non-colonial social

arrangements which involved gender, and the consistent overall degradation of women (Loomba, 1998, McClintock, 1995; Gasa, et al., 2008).

Nineteenth century racial classifications were primarily driven by the terror of colonial notions of gender dynamics, whose potential to create unpredictable heterosexual/ reproductive relationships between those born to the context and those seeking new power within it was obvious (McClintock, 1995). The preservation of "racial purity" was a gendered business, twisting the meanings of "race" and "gender" together into deadly ideological prisms through which to implement economic and political policies . As a form of epistemological violence, post nineteenth-century processes of "becoming gendered" within African contexts were inextricably linked to racializations which rationalized the theft of land, resources, and authority.

At one level, then, the epistemological gaze of colonialism[4] has been argued as foundational to research on gender and violence in contemporary African contexts. The gaze itself is seen as intensely violent, shoving human beings in complex and diverse forms of social and political organization into new and distorted categories of humanity. In British colonial contexts, within the c20, such categories included "our women", "European women", "native women", "non-European women," "Coloured women", "black women," "white women", "African women". The relationship here between becoming gendered and violence is thus intimate; the violence is an epistemological and discursive one, wrapping human beings into categories of otherness alien to their own ways of being and working, and useful only to the operation of class formation and the extraction of local labour.

At another level, records of colonial administration suggest another form of connection between gender and violence. The earliest legal codes against rape in Cape Town and in "Rhodesia" were put in place explicitly to "protect" white settler women from the local men around (and in) their homes, and no sanctions were formalized to protect local women, and girls, from settler men's sexual and physical violence. Most lenses through which we can illuminate the links between different forms of early c20 gender dynamics and the violences of sexual assault, battery, abduction, harassment, and torment are muddied and distorting. They highlight the hypersexualization of "African masculinities" as aggressive; they construct "European women" as cocooned and sexually fragile racists; the lives, relationships, engagements with sexual delight or heterosexually-generated violences between ordinary men and women largely disappear.

The avalanche of African feminist challenges to "ordinary" violence – wife-

beating, sexual abuse of girls and women, sexual harassment in public and work-places – in post-independence states, from the late 1980's onwards, did not come from nowhere. However, there is a powerful myth that in contexts of liberation struggles, grave political instability, and conflict, women who are being targeted for violence (especially sexual violence) by men in their daily lives do not usually challenge this violence for fear of "betraying" the men and the movements they may belong to. This myth is usually accompanied by a twin: that African activism combating violence against women in the late 80's and 90's (through to Beijing in 1995) was rooted in copy-cat work based on Northern feminist writings and ideologies of patriarchy. Not only is this simplistic (Northern feminist writings and activism of the late 80s and 90's are full of debate about the connection between gender and violence, and include very strong voices of critique – mostly by women of colour[5] – on analyses which ignore the dynamics of imperialism); it is simultaneously derogatory, profiling diverse African -based women activists and thinkers as a mere flock of sheep.

Overall, however, there is very little systematic research on how women largely invisibilized by colonial and early independence records[6], who may have experienced violence from particular men as part and parcel of their lives as daughters, wives, or family workers, fought against this. And there is even less which seeks to trace a history of those wrestles and negotiations from the early c20, in a specific contexts, to the 1990's efforts of feminist thinkers and activists to change laws, to institute organizations to advocate against women's abuse, and to write about what it is that survivors of such abuse might know about the politics of gendered embodiment.

In South Africa, hints of women's rejection of sexual harassment and gender-based stigmatization come to us through the records of trade union movements from the early 80s, from the pages of *Speak*[7], from the acknowledgement of high-ranking *Umkhonto we Sizwe* women cadres that sexual violence took place within the underground military formation (Mtintso, 1997), from the formation of organizations (People Opposed to Women Abuse), and the records of women's organizations who were part of the broad anti-apartheid mass movement of the 1980s, such as the Port Alfred Women's Organization (Meer, 1990: 80).

In Senegal, Awa Thiam's *La Parole aux Negresses* was written in 1978, and documented in an inimitable way her outrage – explicitly feminist – at the range of violences women in parts of West Africa speak of suffering at

the hands of husbands, fathers, brothers, families, and other women (she includes female genital cutting as one of four dominant and normalized forms of violence against women) (Thiam, 1978). Women in Nigeria (WIN) was formed in 1982, and explicitly identified sexual violence against women as one of the major barriers to their participation in the economy (Mohammd and Madunagu, 1986). Such evidence (a tip of the iceberg) of engaged theoretical work suggests roots but – to my knowledge – no comprehensive narrative of the threads of pan-African feminist theory and activism arising from analyses of links between gender dynamics and violence from the early c20 to the 1990's[8].

By the late 1990's, however, what is indisputable is the number of NGOs on the continent dedicated to the support of women and girls who had been abused, physically, sexually, economically and psychologically by people gendered as men (and related to these survivors in more ways than it is possible to describe) (Green, 1999). This support included counseling, legal advocacy, efforts to integrate a women's recovery from violence into new opportunities for economic well-being, finding shelter, training law enforcement officials, writing educational materials, driving policy change, conducting research. The work was almost always donor-supported (but struggled for resources), and driven by women who worked often, at first, as volunteers. The term "gender-based violence" came to replace the phrase "violence against women" as the preferred term for the kinds of violence suffered by women, it was theorised, on account of their gendered status within different contexts.

Gender, as a political dynamic, thus became theoretically foregrounded as a force which organized "women" into positions of vulnerability (through marriage, ideological notions of "belonging" to men in terms of customary norms, and/or through options for access to labour and resources). The control of sexuality was understood to be part and parcel of the deployment of gender against women, and thus a term like "gender-based violence" came to encompass a vast range of potential violations: rape, domestic assault, abduction, trafficking, incest, sexual harassment, beating, murder of wives and sexual partners, and so on. Intersectional analyses stressed the importance of class, ethnicity, race, and/or age to analyses of gender-based violence, and usually recognized that women with fewer resources were more vulnerable to sustained violence. The meaning of sexuality, in this approach, was strongly oriented towards the deconstruction of heterosexualities as zones of risk and mutilation masquerading as "pleasure", "intimacy" and "family" for both

people gendered as "men" and "women".

In many ways, however, this approach to the link between gender dynamics and violence struggled with theories which position colonialism (and its legacies) as responsible for rooting particular possibilities for gendered cruelty into African-based people's lives. The struggle manifested itself in the discursive dichotomization of "modernity" and "tradition" (where "tradition" normalized violence against women as ritual and "modernity" recognized such ritual as inhumane), and in the associated pair: "culture" and "rights" (here, "culture" tolerates, and even encourages, violent masculinities and passive forms of womanhood, while "rights" welcomes gendered equality, free of abuse).

Some theorists tried to bridge these dichotomies by suggesting that the economic legacies of colonialisms, and the projects of independence which failed (or were not interested in) the redistribution of resources, accounted for gender-based violence – economically disempowered men were theorized as "e-masculated", and sought to establish their authority through rape, or women-battery (Kraak and Simpson, 1998 Mills and Ssewakaringa, 2005). Others have chosen a different route by stressing the fluidity and pragmatisms of "culture" and stressing the historical fact that rights discourses in African contexts (especially those entrenched in constitutions) are part and parcel of national debates about justice, humanity, and morality, and thus as "cultural" as any other prism (Ndashe, 2004).

The first argument is discriminatory and counterfactual (if all men disempowered by poverty turned to gender-based violence as a modus vivendi, I think the -- admittedly unsatisfactory – quantifications of assault against women and girls would escalate hugely; in addition, men with resources are very well documented as perpetrators, world-wide).

The second is much more interesting; it leaves hanging, though, the conundrum of origin. If an interest in rights (including the right to be free of sexual violence and domestic assault) is as thoroughly imbued with African sensibilities, debate, and negotiation as any other legal concept with which our judiciaries work, then from where does the overwhelming "normalization" of some men's sexual, domestic, professional, and privatized violence against women (and, often, girls) stem?

Different interlocutors?

In the past decade, the relationship between violence and gender has been raised in debates which, on the surface of it, are not organically connected to African feminist theories which seek to politicize the private, exposing conventional contexts of security (the family, the marriage, the religious, the intimate) as zones of gendered power struggles where women may lose hope, sexual pleasure and health, resources, and sanity alike.

These debates are very interesting, both in themselves, and for what they can offer to c21 discussion of "gender," "sexuality" and "violence". The most prolific of them has been the years of work on the transmission and treatment of the HI virus. A second lies in the efforts to integrate an understanding of gender dynamics into the theorization of militarism and conflict; this discussion has been especially sharp around the meaning of rape as a weapon of conflict and war-mongering. A third – not unrelated to the other two – takes the performances and rituals of masculinities seriously, exploring the processes of becoming gendered as a boy and man in ways which are more interested in political and economic pressures towards a tolerance for violence (towards men and – differently – towards women) than in ideas about masculinities and testosterone.

HIV, gendered and sexual dynamics, and notions of violence

Material on the links between sociality, gender, violence, and HIV and AIDS is so vast that it would be naïve to try and summarize the theoretical contributions of African feminists in a short section here. Suffice it to say that the dominant contribution here is three-fold. Firstly, a challenge to the initially overwhelming biomedical orientation of thought on African bodies and lives, in the context of HIV, from sociologists, public health researchers and feminists insisted – in the mid-90s – on putting gender dynamics squarely into the centre of questions about HIV transmission and treatment. Secondly, the shift from the search for marginal populations responsible for transmission (gay men, long distance truck drivers, sex workers) to the recognition that transmission occurs most frequently within the ordinary dramas of sex-lives (teenage romance, marital beds, sex-for-pleasure, affairs and multiple partnering) encourage thoughtfulness about the shapes of heterosexual liaison, and the place of gender dynamics within them. Young women and men, women having sex with men who had several partners, married women, and sexual transactions of many different kinds became routes to "identities" which were not as easily

stigmatized as "immoral" or "sinful" and therefore deserving of the virus. Thirdly, gender-based violence was gradually accepted as worth consideration in understanding transmission. The definition of "gender-based violence" here is, however, fuzzy; there is research which targets practices such as widow inheritance (Nyanzi, 2009), virginity testing, and female genital cutting as practices which increase the likelihood of transmission of the virus to girls and women. Within a separable theorization of "gender-based violence" in some countries, the fact that the HI virus can be transmitted during any form of rape is medically and legally recognized (everyone involved is vulnerable, of course, but the body vulnerable to the most trauma is also most vulnerable to transmission). Overall, African feminist work has done much to centralize gender dynamics as essential to understanding the relations of power, identity, and agencies in which transmission becomes possible.

Masculinities research

The question of masculinities could be located both within its own theoretical trajectory within African-rooted scholarship and activism, and it could also be argued to have strong dialogue with HIV-oriented discussion. The first collected edition of research on "African masculinities" was put together in 2005 by L. Ouzgane and R. Morrell, *African Masculinities: men in Africa from the late nineteenth century to the present.* The collection is wide-ranging; the overarching frame however is explicitly concerned with hybridities of masculinization created in collusion with, and rebellion against, diverse forms of political and/or religious authorities. And although there is empirical evidence in the different chapters suggesting that degradation of people gendered as women is normalized within masculinities, no chapter explicitly confronts the relationship between becoming masculine and tolerance of violence, especial violence against women.

It is the work on masculinities connected with HIV transmission which foregrounds questions of violence towards women as tightly wound into the possibility of men's access to status, peer-bonding and authority. The work is heavily concentrated upon Southern Africa, and the performances of masculinities within youth cultures, urban poverties, work environments, and mobile professional cosmopolitan success are peppered with high levels of tolerance for violence against women, strong investment in visibly "successful" sexuality, and seeming indifference (in heterosexual encounters) to women's sexual power, choice, or pleasure (Burja, 2002; Barker, 2005;

Morrell, 2003; Varga, 2001, Campbell, 2000; Shefer et al, 2005; Smith, 2007). Much of the theory is carefully attuned to the shifting economic landscapes within the contexts under study, linking the shapes of changing masculinities to questions of forced migrancy, highly competitive markets for labour, and the challenges of political and economic instability.

A few voices (such as Tina Sideris, Kopano Ratele, Lincoln Theo), consistently wary of the spectral historical figures conjured up by discourses of hyper(hetero)sexuality, violent and careless misogynies, and myopically self-seeking itinerant identities, encourage an imaginative engagement with masculinity which could dislocate becoming gendered from predications concerning authority, labour, and power. Reading the work as a collective, however, one is struck overall by how little theory rejects "masculinization" as an interesting or socially valuable route to the notion of *human being*, flirting instead with notions of "crises" and "flaws" (Murunga, 2010).

Militarism as violence

The work of African feminists who concentrate on understanding the technologies, processes and strategies of conflict and militarism (Mama and Okazawa-Rey, 2008; Ochieng, 2008; Lewis, 2006; Karame, 2006) is a different critical interlocutor. The theorization in this field of the relationship between gender and violence is somewhat unsettled (and unsettling). On the one hand, the intimacies between gendered options for being alive (and the ways these are embedded into questions of access to land and resources) and the shapes of the violence within armed conflict are clear. As Clarke suggests, it is precisely a reliance on gendered convention (even as conflict zones may radicalize these at moments of extreme crisis) which contributes to the formation of "armies", "refugees", "those who kill", "those who flee" (Clarke, 2008). Here, Butler's argument that gender dynamics are implicated – as categorical violence -- into the deepest centres of social process (and must manifest as such) resonates (Butler, 2004).

On the other hand, the extraordinary work of ISIS-WICCE, Uganda, as an organization which documents the experiences of women survivors of war and armed conflict (Ochieng, 2008) is less concerned with the notion of gender *as* epistemic (and actualized) violence. ISIS-WICCE is interested in the knowledges of war told through the voices of women who have survived catastrophic devastation and/or who have found ways to organize their way into leadership and influence in the face of obdurate "post-conflict"

processes and the conflict-driven destruction of all community livelihood. The conviction that women's stories matter, politically and epistemologically, is driven not so much by any essentialism but by a decade of information on what gendered embodiment, in conflict zones, has meant for those largely marginalized by the categories of "armed fighter"[9], "*military commander*," or "*peace-negotiator*".

Just as theory on gender and violence created through a focus on masculinities struggles with the idea that the processes of becoming gendered are, in themselves, a form of violence (so that the quest for a "non-violent" masculinity is oxymoronic), so the writing on gender and violence emerging from consideration of conflict, transitional justice, or militarism struggles with the public/private divide, a classic point of feminist analytic deconstruction. There is virtually no recognition within recent writing on conflict and peace-building of the fact that violence against women, and the knowledge of political embodiment which flows from these experiences, has been a cornerstone of feminist theory for decades. It is as though the degradation, sexual attacks, and mass public terrorization of war and conflict dwell in space uninformed by the possibility of domestic assault, rape, or gendered fear and brutality within "civilian" or "peaceful" (and private) environments. Although writers like Sideris, Gqola, and Muthien have, as feminists, rejected talk about security and conflict which accepts the distinction between "war" and "peace" for women (or men) (Sideris, 2003; Gqola, 2000), other theorists and activists are not so sure that what happens under conditions of mass-based, multi-pronged, armed conflict should be conflated, theoretically or strategically, with the vulnerabilities of femininity within the home, the ordinary street, and the normalizations of gender dynamics.

"Circles and circles": the violence of heteronormativities

"You can just go round and round in circles and circles: you can't be at school because you want to be a boy, not a girl; you can't go home because your mother says you are killing her; you can't see your father because he says if you are such a boy, you can join the army and fight like a man and hopefully you will be killed; you can't kiss your girlfriend because you are so scared about what will happen when she finds out; you are a man and you need to get check-ups for cervical cancer, because that's what your sister died of; you go round and round, circles

and circles in your head; you feel insane, and then you realize, they have got you" (participant, transgender justice workshop, Cape Town, October, 2010)

In the five years since Urgent Action published its report on LGBTI rights as the "true test for human rights defenders" (Kiragu, 2005), the assault on counter-heteronormativities across the continent has escalated dramatically[10]. This escalation has included repeated efforts by state actors (including Presidents), senior religious authorities, judicial officials, and a wide range of bodies (from the African Union to WILDAF) to intensify legal, political and social discrimination against anyone identified as *lgbti* (and – in some cases – anyone supportive of *lgbti* people's rights and lives)[11]. Even in a country like South Africa, where legislation actively protects these rights, violent homophobia can be witnessed in the media, in popular and religious discourses, and in targeted and sometimes lethal assaults (Mkize, et al., 2010). The violence is frequently legitimated through reference to religious texts (often unexplored in any exegetically honest way), through sweeping notions of pan-African cultural homogeneity, and through a particular version of anti-"Western" discourse.

Experiences of such violence are terrifying and the shapes in which perpetrators come are endlessly various: brothers, friends, school-teachers, doctors, strangers, priests, parents, police officers, lawyers, street traders, children, taxi-drivers, party-goers, musicians, politicians, writers, soccer-players. As varied as the perpetrators, so are the forms of the violence: everything from murder to levels of unimaginable social and economic exclusion. The outrage and hatred catalysed through homo/transphobia is bewilderingly violent, and yet, with the exception of a few feminist organizations on the continent (notably *Sister Namibia, Amanitare, Urgent Action* and *POWA*), there has been very little activism based in linkages between "gender-based violence" and "homo/transphobic violence" and indeed, African *lgbti* organizations (and individuals) have not been wholeheartedly welcomed[12] into the strategic work of those tackling domestic violence (for example) or those who focus on gender and transitional justice or gender and militarism. Given that some of Africa's leading feminist voices have, in the past decade, been publicly both explicit about the theoretical links between gender, the processes of heteronormativities, and the multi-stratal layers at which new gender-formations are resisted (often very violently) and explicit, too, about

the possibilities of working across and within these layers[13], this lack of deep co-operation seems odd.

Arguments to particularize homo/transphobic violence?

It is certainly the case that the current violences directed towards *lgbti* people – at the surface – seem differently organized from those marshalled (for example) through domestic violence. For one thing, they are legal, in many forms, and widely justified in popular and religious opinion. For another, the authority to police *lgbti* space, identities, and relationships is devolved across society: children in the schoolyard can be as powerful in their active homophobia as state jurists.

Thirdly, while (again for example) advocacy against domestic violence often recognizes the term "women" as a stable category, essential to advocacy, *lgbti* connotes so loose – and diverse – a constituency of people, issues, and political struggles that it is barely understood by popular discourses. It may be possible to grasp a slogan such as *"real men don't beat women"*; it is much more difficult to accept that categorization by gender, and attendant assumptions about sexualities, may constitute harassment in itself, and legitimates a flood of subtle and gross brutality. The latter is not a slogan; neither does it slot smoothly into the current languages of gender equality. While domestic violence may target a woman for being a "bad wife", and the violence of war-mongerers may be fuelled by notions of national, ethnic, religious and militia/gang memberships, the violence of *lgbti*-oriented assaults seems to deny the possibility of *lgbti* humanity itself.

And finally, of course, *lgbti* justice demands rethinking masculinity. It is not enough to suggest that homophobia targeted at people gendered as men (*gay, MSM, the man who thinks other men are beautiful as soul/sexual partners*) is simply a particular form of political surveillance, catching all people born with visible penises into diverse networks and negotiations of masculinities. Gay men certainly negotiate masculinities; they also, however, redefine the language of desire, insisting on pleasures that resist domestication or formal authority[14]. And transphobia cannot imagine masculinity without a conventionally-sexed male body. While there has been a growth of literature on African masculinities, almost nothing takes up the question lived by transmen: what masculinities can be fashioned through re-sexing the body? if masculinity may be a choice (although an urgent one, for transmen and transwomen), what options for 'new masculinities' – or new "human beings" -

can be glimpsed? The "new masculinities" desired by those theorizing gender-based violence (Sideris, 2004) prioritize an interest in "women's" freedom *(women's rights are human rights!)*; the "new masculinities" theorized through transexperiences despise the notion that the processes of becoming gendered should be fixed in relation to one another, except by the choice of those involved (Marais, Morgan, Wellbeloved, 2009; Cabral, 2005)..

This places theorization of violence into a seeming dilemma: if ideas about patriarchy and colonialism predict that masculinization encourages violence, the link between gender and violence is causal and catalytic – gendering dichotomizes the organization of social violence, just as it dichotomizes the organization of labour, authority, or ownership of land. If ideas about contemporary conventions about being gendered as "men" or "women" (which include predictions about heteronormativity) predict violence, the shape of the link changes. It becomes one of ontology. Gendering is no longer implicated in shaping the terms of violence: gender, as practiced conventionally despite diversity of contexts, *is* violence.

Closer than at first sight?

I have made four arguments above for differentiating thought about the experiences of violences aimed at *lgbti* people and the experiences of those (especially women) assaulted by rape, domestic violence, sexual assault, and sexual harassment: the public encouragement of homo/transphobia, the wide social participation in active homo/transphobia, the complexity of the *lgbti* space in political and popular imagination, and the place of masculinities in each zone. Perhaps there are more; what needs to be done with these four arguments, however, is to suggest that, under scrutiny, they weaken considerably.

Firstly, the question of the criminalization of homosexuality and (under the guise of "public nuisance" laws) the active police harassment of transmen and transwomen[15] - it must be recognized that African feminist thought and activism has long struggled against the criminalization and harassment of people gendered as women, who are simply going about their business. The category "woman" is hierarchized through the ever-embattled politics of respectability, and the deconstructive polarization of "good" and "bad" women has long been a tenet of feminist theory worldwide, resisting the split between "wife" and "sex worker", "innocent girl-child" and "pregnant teenager"; "poor woman" and "vagrant"; "mother" and "single woman". Longwe v Hotel Intercontinental (1992) laid a precedent setting case against

a Zambian hotel for police harassment when Sara Longwe sought to enter the hotel on her own; as recently as two months ago, the Ugandan Minister of Ethics and integrity forced the cancellation of a sex workers' conference outside Kampala because sex-work is illegal in Uganda[16]. African feminist struggles for women's rights, and their freedom of movement, political choice, and economic independence, have stories to share with those incarcerated, mocked, and put under fear of assault and battery as *lgbti* people.

Secondly, conventional processes of gender are rigorously policed, and notions of gender norms shape the experience of becoming human (and recognized as being human) from at least birth onwards. Children certainly play their part here, especially once formal schooling systems shape their lives; homophobia is used as a weapon in these patterns of surveillance but just as *lgbti* is ostracized, so too are "girls" and "boys" who refuse to conform to the expected norms of their context. Such ostracism and stigmatization play out in the micro-politics of lived experience, entangled with and shaped by other critical social forces. The argument that it is only homo/transphobia which can conscript so wide a range of advocates (small children through to presidents and chiefs) does not hold water beyond a certain point. The terrorization of a young man perceived as a "moffie" bears witness to practices of gender and (mis)knowledges about sexuality which influence the rejection of teenage mothers from schools, the pathologization of unemployed young men, the religious restrictions around the right to reproductive choice, the vulnerability of women to sexual abuse. And so on.

In 1988, Suzanne Pharr wrote *Homophobia: A Weapon of Sexism* whose theory was based on the experiences of thousands of lesbian women she had encountered as she ran support and advocacy groups across the United States of America (Pharr, 1988). Her theoretical position was simple: homophobia (she was not, at that point, thinking about the experiences of transgendered and intersexed people) relied upon conservative prescriptions for gender dynamics and these prescriptions included the demand for heterosexual performance and demanded, too, very hierarchized patterns of gender within this performance.

Pharr's grasp that the political interests of homophobia overlapped with, and were utterly complicit with, sexist notions about women's inferiority and the operation of conventional gender norms which reinforce this inferiority became overridden in the 90's, within Northern theory of sexualities (powerfully driven by queer discourses arising in part from the war against

USA HIV/AIDS policies in the late 80's/early 90's, and drawing on Foucault rather than Millett – or more usefully, Barbara Smith). Within mainstream USA theory and politics, the zones of "reproductive and sexual health and rights", "queer", "lesbian feminism". "transgender justice" grew steadily apart in the 90's[17] -- and fundamental concerns about intersectionalities became marginalized, especially within queer scholarship and activism.

In contemporary African contexts, however, strong activist voices in *lgbti* have long recognized that the term "lesbian", for example cannot be automatically separated either from questions of masculinity or from issues of heterosexuality, nor can it be separated from questions of religion, racialization, class, and the meaning of post-independence nation-building. Even if one is ready to accept, as (so far) many activists in the area have done, that the term can be incorporated into political organisation and advocacy, the fact is that it constitutes an "imposition" over most linguistic descriptors for sexual and reproductive identities. In South Africa, for example, there are on the one hand derogatory terms, such as '*Nongayindoda*' in isiZulu, which stigmatise women thought to be living beyond accepted heterosexual norms of dress, behaviour or desire. On the other hand, there are no widely accepted, positive, non-colonial terms for a celebrated and chosen, non-conventional sexual identity. In addition, many lesbian women have children and long to have children and have past or ongoing social relationships with men. A clear separation between the gendered politics of reproduction and the politics of alternative sexual identity is not useful when it comes to deep understandings of lesbians' daily experiences. And the question of "lesbian masculinity" is taken up with vigour in the negotiation of several South Africans with their preferences for self-recognition, sexual orientation and gender identification (Mkize, et al., 2010).

This re-raises arguments three and four – about the complexity of *lgbti* as opposed to the (relatively) straightforward *women* of gender equality advocacy, and about the meaning of masculinity for theories on gender and violence. Of course *women* is certainly not a "relatively straightforward" term (decades of feminist theory attest to that) – argument three is almost ludicrous in the face of familiarity with the terrain. And of course many contemporary people gendered as "men" (through myriad relationships to masculinities) are intimately acquainted with the possibilities of taking skilled (and unskilled) violence into their repertoires of professional, political, and personal agency. We cannot afford to spend time obfuscating that fact. What *lgbti* theory and activism suggests, however, is that we are at the very

beginnings of re-imagining worlds in which becoming human (let alone operating economically, culturally and socially) does not entail, as a primary politics, the process of becoming gendered. The politics of sexual and gender identity have moved questions about masculinity, agency, sexual choice and freedom from violence beyond dichotomization (perpetrator/victim; man/woman; white/black[18]) towards ideas which destabilize predictability and insist on a politics of transformation far beyond notions of "gender balance".

Lgbti-imaginations

In conclusion to this section, I would argue that representations of recent *lgbti* experience, in different African contexts, offer three essential edges to the theorization of gender and violence.

Firstly, these experiences reposition "the domestic" and "the nation at peace" as zones of intense and targeted danger; the explosion of the public/private split has long been, as noted earlier, central to feminist theory and particularly powerful in the analysis of labour. It has however been somewhat backgrounded by work on militarism and gender (which has understandably focused on the meaning of mass-mongered conflict, peace negotiation, and notions of transitional justice – all very "public" endeavours), and theorists of gender-based violence have always struggled to get non-feminist acceptance (at, for example, policy level) that the conditions of violence faced by some women, boys and girls within the domestic render national notions of being 'at peace' very vulnerable. It is much easier to advocate for the elimination of gender-based violence via the design and implementation of democratically-aligned policy than it is to assert that any country is, via gender-based violence, at civil war. Violence against *lgbti* space, education, identities, and lives dissolves any pretence that the public/private split is analytically useful to mapping vulnerability, causation, and participants.

Secondly, *lgbti* challenges to systemic violence offer very interesting truths about the nature of impossible battles (such as the battle to eliminate sexual abuse, or the struggle to make economically driven conflict a thing of the past). The constituency of African *lgbti* activists is tiny, and many face regular physical and legal threats against their lives. However, the number of small *lgbti* NGOs in Uganda now stands at over 10[19], the expansion of the South African Durban Lesbian and Gay Community Centre (which has always prioritized the health and security of working-class black gay and lesbian people) in 2010 includes three new "mini-projects as centres" in poor, small,

towns, and the Coalition for African Lesbians applied to the African Union for observer status. The AU's refusal made international headlines[20]. Although often in struggle[21], *lgbti* activism can be theorized as a zone of "possibility", an on-going testament to the fact that despite enormous odds, change (uneven, costly, and fragile) is visible – 5 years ago, no *lgbti* organizations on the continent existed as political forces, except in South Africa, Namibia, and Zimbabwe.

Thirdly, *lgbti* debate and strategy refuses to release the terms "gender", "sexuality", and "violence" into notions dominated by pain, damage, violation, and coercion. Although a handful of individual African feminists (such as Jessica Horn, Patricia Mcfadden, Sylvia Tamale) and a wide coalition of SRHR activists have insisted that pleasure and desire should be part and parcel of sexualities debates, and that women's right to sexual pleasure deserved specific attention in the design of sexual health and education programmes, much feminist writing continued to work simply with the theory that becoming gendered as a woman made (hetero)sexual suffering, in the worlds of neoliberalism, aggressive nationalism and patriarchal institutions, likely. Within *lgbti* space, discourse on the politics of sexual pleasure has never had to be "recouped" from the overwhelming association of sex with suffering (necessarily) embedded in gender-based violence writing. In part, and ironically, this has to do with homophobia itself: particularly lesbian, gay, and bisexual people are categorized as "only sexual" in their identities (their sexual practices may be deviant and/or illegal, but they do engage sexually). More usefully, it has been the *lgbti* focus on the politics of sexuality and gender, and an openness towards the importance of sexuality which has tackled deeply ingrained restrictions and fears head on, in ways campaigns around HIV transmission have still not accomplished (especially for women).

Conclusion

This article set out to sketch a terrain in which there are multiple, differently rooted, conversations among African feminists about gender and violence. There are few resolved debates, and many ways in which discussion which leads, in a pan-African gaze, towards mutual understanding and cohesive strategizing remains a naïve idea. In 2010, however, I would argue that it is safe to suggest that the terms "gender" and "violence" remain simultaneously deeply entwined (even interchangeable, for some of us) *and* infinitely separable (perhaps *genderings* may be imaginable, free of their current inscription into

complex hierarchies[22]?)

What matters most, perhaps, is recognition of what it entails to battle the *'circles and circles in your head; you feel insane, and then you realize, they have got you'*. As I understand it, so far, one needs lateral thinking, passionate engagement with some of those not necessarily in agreement with one, delighted suspension of belief in the normal and open arms. I would argue that this is theoretical work in the strongest sense of the term: work which is rigorously attuned to the importance of multiple debates, even in the face of material and strategic violence which can have the power (temporarily) to obliterate any sense that we have time to devote to discussion.

References and Endnotes:

Abrahams, Y. 2000. *Colonialism, Dysfunction, and Disjuncture*, doctoral dissertation, University of Cape Town.

Aline, A. and G. Benne. 1986. "WIN: A Militant Approach to the Mobilization of Women", *Review of African Political Economy*, 37, 35-42

Amos, V. and P. Parmer. 1997. "Challenging imperial feminism", in *Black British Feminism*, edited by H. Safia Mirza London and New York: Routledge.

Arnfred, S. (ed.) 2004. "Re-thinking Sexualities in Africa: Introduction", in *Rethinking Sexualities in Africa,* ed. Signe Arnfred, Nordic Africa Institute.

Baylies, C. and J. Burja. 2001. *AIDS, Sexuality and Gender in Africa: Strategies and Struggles in Tanzania and Zambia.* London: Routledge

Bennett, J. 2009. "Challenges were many: the One in Nine Campaign, South Africa", Association for Women in Development (AWID), www.comminit.com/en/node/285270/348

Bennett, J. and V. Reddy 2009. "Feeling the Disconnect: Pedagogies of gender and Sexuality in South African Higher Education", *International Journal of Sexual Health,* 79-92

Butler, J. 2004. *Undoing Gender.* New York and London: Routledge

Butler, 2004. *Precarious Life, the Power of Mourning and Violence.*London: Chatwin

Carpenter, C. 2006. "Recognizing Gender-Based Violence against Civilian Men and Boys In Conflict Situations", *Security Dialogue* 37, 83-103

Chodron, P. 2006. *Practicing Peace in Times of War.* Boston and London: Shambala.

Clarke, Y. 2008. "Security Sector Reform in Africa: an opportunity to deconstruct militarised masculinities?, *Feminist Africa* 10, 49-66

Collins, P. 1990. *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics*

of Empowerment. Boston: Unwin Hayman.

Epprecht, M. 2005. "Male - male sexuality in Lesotho: Two Conversations" in G. Reid and L. Walker (eds.) *Men Behaving Differently.* Cape Town: Double Storey Books.

Essof, S. 2005 "She-murenga: Challenges, Opportunities and Setbacks of the Women's Movement in Zimbabwe," *Feminist Africa 4,* 29-45

Gear, S. 2005. "Rules of Engagement: Structuring sex and damage in men's prisons and beyond", in *Men Behaving Differently,* edited by G. Reid and L.Walker, Cape Town: DoubleStorey Books.

Geisler, G. 2004. *Women and the Remaking of Politics in Southern Africa: Negotiating Autonomy, Incorporation and Representation* .Uppsala: Nordiska Afrikainstitutit.

Gqola. P.D. 2006. "After the Zuma Case: Gender Violence and the Constitution", Ruth First lecture, University of Witwatersrand, www.wits.ac.za/journalism/presentation/gqola.htm, accessed September 9th, 2010

Gqola, P.D. 2010. *What's Slavery to Me?* Johannesburg: Wits University Press.

Green, D. 1999. *Gender Violence in Africa: African Women's Responses.* London: MacMillan Press.

Gunkel, H. 2010. *The Cultural Politics of Female Sexuality in South Africa* New York and London: Routledge.

Hassim, S. 1999. "From Presence to Power: Women's Citizenship in a New Democracy" *Agenda* 40, 67-76

Hassim, S. 2006. *Women's Organizations and Democracy in South Africa: Contesting Authority.* Pietermaritzburg: University of KwaZulu/Natal Press.

Hlatshwayo, Z. and B. Klugman 2002. "A sexual rights approach," in *Agenda,* 47

Hollimbaugh, A. 1984. "Desire for the Future: Radical Hope in Passion and Pleasure, " in *Pleasure and Danger: Exploring Female Sexuality,* edited by C.Vance. London, New York: Routledge and Kegan Paul

Horn, J. 2003. "AMANITARE and African Women's Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights" ,*Feminist Africa* 2 , 73-8-0

Karame, K. and G. Bertinussen. 2001. *Gendering Human Security: From Margination to Integration of Women in Peace-Building.* Oslo: Norwegian Institute of International Affairs and Institute for Applied Social Science.

Keshwa, B. & Wieringa, S. 2005. "'My Attitude Is Manly ... a Girl Needs to Walk on the Aisle': Butch-Femme Subculture in Johannesburg, South Africa", in: Ruth Morgan and Saskia Wieringa, (eds.) *Tommy Boys, Lesbian Men and Ancestral Wives. Female Same-Sex Practices in Africa.* Johannesburg: Jacana.

Kim, J.C. 2000. "Rape and HIV Post-Exposure Prophylaxis: The Relevance and the Reality in South Africa". Discussion Paper, WHO Meeting on Violence Against Women and HIV/AIDS: Setting the Research Agenda. Genf, 23-25 October 2000. Available at hwww.wits.ac.za/Health/PublicHealth/Radar/PDF%20files/rape_pep.PDF accessed July 27th, 2010

Kiragu, J. and Nyongo, Z. 2005. *LGBTI Organizing in East Africa: The True Test for Human Rights Defenders.* Kampala, Urgent Action.

Kowen, D. & Davis, J. 2006. "Opaque Young Lives: Experiences of Lesbian Youth". *Agenda*, 67: 80-92

Lewis. D. 2004. "African Gender Research and Postcoloniality: Legacies and Challenges", in Arnfred, S., Bakare-Yusuf, B., Wasa Kisiang'ani, Lewis, D., Oyewumi, O., and F. C. Steady (eds.) *African Gender Scholarship: Concepts, Methodologies and Paradigms.* Dakar: CODESRIA Gender Series 1.

Lindsay, L. and M. Stephan (eds.) 2003. *Men and Masculinities in Modern Africa.* Portsmouth: New Hampshire Press.

Loomba, A. 1998. *Colonialism-Postcolonialism.* New York and London: Routledge

Magubane, Z. 2001. "Which Bodies Matter? Feminism, Poststructuralism, Race and the Curious Theoretical Odyssey of the "Hottentot Venus," *Gender and Society*, 15, 6, 51-64

Mama, A. 1997. "Shedding the Masks and Tearing the Veils, "in *Engendering African Social Sciences*,_ edited by A. Iman, A. Mama and F. Sow. Dakar: CODESRIA Books.

Mama, A. 1997. "Sheroes and Villains: Conceptualizing Colonial and Contemporary Violence Against Women in Africa," in J. Alexander and C. Mohanty (eds.), Feminist Genealogies, Colonial Legacies, Democratic Futures. London and New York: Routledge.

Mama, A. 2005. "Women Mobilized", *Feminist Africa* 4, 1-9

Mama, A. and M. Okazawa-Rey. 2008. "Editorial: Militarism, Conflict and Women's Activism," *Feminist Africa,* 10, 1-8

McClendon, M. 2002. "Courting Tradition: Law, Sexuality and the Control of Women, 1927-1944" in *Gender and Generations Apart: Labour Tenants and Customary Law in Segregation Era South Africa 1920s-1940s.* Cape Town: David Philip.

McClintock, A. 1995. *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Conquest.* New York: Routledge

McFadden, P. 1997. "The Cultural Complexity of Sexual Harassment and Violence and how Sexual Harassment poses a barrier to the educational and professional development of staff and students" paper given at Conference on Sexual Harassment and Higher Education, Gaborone.

Meer. S. 1998. *Women Speak: Reflections on Our Struggles.* Cape Town: Kwela Books.

Mills, D. and R. Ssewakiryanga. 2005. "No Romance Without Finance: Commodities, Masculinities and Relationships amongst Kampalan Students", in *Readings in Gender in Africa*, edited by A.Cornwall, Bloomington and Indiana: Indiana University Press.

Mernissi,F. 2001. *Sheherazade Goes West,* New York: Washington Square Press.

Mkhize, N., J. Bennett., V. Reddy and Moletsane, R. 2010. *The Country We Want to Live In: Hate Crimes and Homophobia in the Lives of Black Lesbian South Africans* Pretoria: Human Sciences Research Council Press.

Mohamed, S. M. 2005. "'Immoral and Satanic': loving secretly in Dar Es Salaam, Tanzania" in *Tommy Boys, Lesbian Men and Ancestral Wives,* ed. R. Morgan and S. Wieringa Johannesburg: Jacana.

Moraga, C. and G. Anzaldua. 1984. *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings By Radical Women of Color.* New York: Kitchen Table Women of Color Press

Motsemme, N. 2005. "Loving in a Time of Hopelessness: On women's subjectivities in a township in a time of AIDS" in N. Gasa (ed.) *Women in South African History:Basus'iimbokodo; Bawel'iimilambo.* Pretoria: Human Sciences Research Council Press.

Morgan, R., Marais, C. and J. R. Wellbeloved. 2009.*Trans:Transgender Life Stories from South Africa.* Johannesburg: Jacana.

Morrell, R. 2003. "Silence, Sexuality and HIV/AIDS in South African Schools," *The Austrailian Educational Researcher,* 30, 1, 41-62

Muholi, Z. 2004. "Thinking through lesbian rape", *Agenda,* 61, 56-72

Murunga, G. 2010. "In Conversation with Jane Bennett" , *Feminist Africa*, 14

Ndashe, S. 2005. "Human Rights, gender and culture – a deliberate confusion?", *Agenda Special Focus: Gender, Culture and Rights*, 36-41

Nyanzi, S., Nasssimwa, J., Kayizzi, V. and S. Kabanda.. 2008. "'African Sex is Dangerous!' Renegotiating Contemporary Sex in Masaka District", *Africa* 78 (4), 518-539

Ochieng, R. 2008. "In Conversation with Margo Okazawa-Rey", *Feminist Africa, 10*, 110-122

Ouzgane, L. and Morrell, R. (eds.) 2005. *African Masculinities: Men in Africa from the late 19th Century to Present.* New York: Palgrave MacMillan.

Oyewumi, O. 2002. "Conceptualizing Gender: The Eurocentric Foundation of Feminist Concepts and Challenges of African Epistemologies", *Jenda: A Journal of Culture and African Studies,* 2, 13-27

Pambazuka, 2004. "Special issue on Sexual and Gender Based Violence" available at http://www.pambazuka.org/en/category/editorial/49427 accessed 12th September, 2010

Pape, J. 1990. "Black and White: The 'Perils of Sex' in Colonial Zimbabwe", *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 16, 4, 699-720

Pereira, C. 2002. "Between Knowing and Imagining: What Space for Feminism in Scholarship on Africa?", *Feminist Africa* 1, 9-33

Pharr, S. 1988. *Homophobia: A Weapon of Sexism.* Berkeley: Chardon Press.

Posel, D. 2005. "'Baby Rape': Unmaking secrets of sexual violence in post-apartheid South Africa", in *Men Behaving Differently: South African Men Since 1994,*

edited by G. Reid and L. Walker. Cape Town: DoubleStorey.

Ratele, K. 2008. "Analysing Males in Africa: Certain Useful Elements in Considering Masculinities," *African and Asian Studies* 7, 515-536

Reddy, S. and M. Dunne. 2007. "Risking It: Young Heterosexual Femininities in South African Context of HIV/AIDS," *Sexualities,* 517-534

Salo, E. 2005. "Multiple Targets, Mixing Strategies: Complicating Feminist Analysis of Contemporary South African Women's Movements", *Feminist Africa 4,* 64-71

Scully, P. 1995. "Race, race, and colonial culture: the sexual politics of identity in the Cape Colony, South Africa, " *The American Historical Review,* 335-359

Sen, A. 2006. *Identity and Violence:the Illusion of Destiny.* London: Penguin.

Shefer, T. and D. Foster. 2001. "Discourses on women's (hetero)sexual desire in a South African local context", *Culture, Health and Sexuality,*3, 4, 375-390

Sideris, T. 'Rape in War and Peace: Social Context, Gender, Power and Identity' in Sheila Meintjes, Anu Pillay and Meredeth Tursen (eds.), *The Aftermath: Women in Post Conflict Transformation* London and New York: Zed Books.

Simpson, G. and G. Kraak 1998. The Illusions of sanctuary and the weight of the past: notes on violence and gender in South Africa," from *Development Update,* Vol 2, 2

Strother, G. 1999. "Display of the Body Hottentot," in *Africans on Stage: Studies in Ethnological Show Business,* edited by B. Lindfors. Bloomington and Indiana University Press.

Tamale, S. 2003. "Out of the Closet: Unveiling Sexuality Discourses in Uganda," in *Feminist Africa*, 2, 42-49

Theo, L. 2010. "'The Trouble With Men' – Frameworks for African Masculinities", www.genderdynamix.co.za/content/view/284/204 accessed August 15th, 2010

Thomas, L. 1997. "'Ngaitana"(I Will Circumcise Myself): The Gender and Generational Politics of the 1956 Ban on Clitorodectomy in Meru, Kenya" in N.R. Hunt, T. Liu and J. Quataert, (eds.), *Gendered Colonialisms in African History*. Oxford/Malden, Massuchusetts: Blackwell.

Thiam, A. 1978. "Speak out, Black Sisters! Black women and oppression in Black Africa, " translated by Dorothy S. Blair, London: Pluto Press, 1986

Tripp, A. 2006. "Concensus, Conflict and New Challenges in Transnational Feminisms," in Freere, M. and A. Tripp, *Transnational Feminisms: Women's Global Activism and Human Rights.* New York: New York University Press.

Turshen, M. 2001. "The Political Economy of Rape: An Analysis if Systematic Rape and Sexual Abuse of Women during Armed Conflict in Africa" in Moser, C. and Clark, F. (eds.) *Victims, Perpetrators or Actors? Armed Conflict and Political Violence.* London and New York: Zed Books.

UNIFEM 2007. *Women Building Peace and Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict Affected Contexts: A Review of Community-Based Approaches* Available at http://womenwarpeace.org/webfm_send/362 accessed 13th September, 2010

van Zyl, M. 2005. "Escaping Heteronormative Bondage" in A. Gouws (ed.) *(Un) Thinking Citizenship*. Aldershot, Burlington and Cape Town: Ashgate and University of Cape Town Press.

Wilson, S., A. Sengupta and K. Evans. 2005. *Defending Our Dreams: Global Feminist Voices for a New Generation*. London and New York: Zed Books.

Endnotes

1. Patricia McFadden, quoted in 'Transformation:An Informal Journal about Yari Yari Pamberi 2004', Felicia Pride, November 2004, www.thebacklist.net

2. Aili Mari Tripp, "Regional Networking as Transnational Feminism:African Experiences," in *Feminist Africa 4, 2005*, 46 -63, p 46

3. I am indebted to Deborah Posel, Institute for the Humanities in Africa, UCT for this phrase as a lens into questions of disciplinarity and the epistemological approaches to 'studying the human' within the humanities and social sciences.

4. It is always dangerous, however, to inscribe colonialism as 'monolithic"; not only did the process take place unevenly, directed by very different national interests and strategies, but in-depth its operations defy homegoenization (see for example Loomba, 1998, and a vast scholarship).

5. See, for example, C. Moraga and G. Anzaldua, 1984; and Patricia Collins, 1990).

6. There are excellent historical studies of the ways women did seek recourse to colonial law on occasion, and studies too on the relationships between rape and enslavement. See, for example, M. McClendon,1994; P. Scully, 1995; P. Gqola, 2010; and Y. Abrahams. 2000.

7. See, for example, from *Speak* 13, 1986, "No to Rape, say Port Alfred Women", article collected in S. Meer , 1998, *Women Speak*, a collation of articles from the popular activist women's magazine, which ran from 1982 – 1997.

8. Perhaps such a narrative is not – in fact – either possible or useful. There are very marked historical and political differences between contexts, and it is not until very recently (such as in settings like the African Feminist Forums) that African-based feminists have begun to explore what a continental frame offers our theoretical approach to questions of gender and violence. Because resistance to violence demands such careful, collective and sophisticated theoretical work, however, I am nonetheless drawn towards the possibility of such a narrative.

9. The fact that women, and girl-children, do become – by choice and by force – armed participants in conflict is not ignored by ISIS-WICCE, or other feminist workers in this area. It is not a fact which threatens an overarching analysis of military violence as damaging to women's lives in ways which fundamentally reshape the meaning of "conflict and peace".

10. I use the term "counter-heteronormativities" because it captures a wide range of ideas and experience concerning sexualites, gender, and embodied life without seeking to homogenize these as identities. As the piece moves, I switch to *lgbti* as a pragmatic term – widely used organizationally – to focus on particular

counter-heteronormativities. The term *lgbti* is deployed within both activist and policy work; there remains, however, a grounded set of debates about whether the acronym appropriately or usefully invokes the diverse realities of people whose lives and being challenge conventional notions of gender and sexuality in contemporary African contexts (see, H. Gunkel, 2010). The article later seeks to resolve these politics of nominalization through returning to the debate on gender and violence.

11. For in-depth detail here, see the ongoing news updates of Behind the Mask, an NGO which uploads information on different countries' engagements with lgbti rights: www.mask.co.za; the WILDAF reference concerns the remarks of Berenice Sam, of Women in Law and Development in Africa of Ghana which argued strongly against same-sex marriage and struck many as inciting homophoba (December, 2010). Ms. Sam has been challenged, but has made no clear statement supporting *lgbti* tights; again, see www.mask.co.za

12. Personal communication, GenderDynamiX transnational training, October, 2010, Cape Town

13. Some examples would be Sylvia Tamale, of Uganda, whose legal advocacy has spanned a wide range of issues, including homophobia; Elizabeth Khaxas and Liz Frank who founded *Sister Namibia*, which has explored a very wide range of feminist concerns; Dawn Cavanagh, who used to work at *FEW (Forum for Women's Equality)* which ran the first anti-hatecrime campaign in Alexandra, South Africa and who also works broadly as a feminist activist in gender-based violence, and access to health for women; Dorothy Aken'ova of *INCREASE (International Centre for Health and Reproductive Rights)* in Nigeria, which has long allied questions of freedom of sexual choice to broad questions of democracy.

14. The question of *g* interest in the politics of gender, particularly the politics of feminism, also deserves examination. This requires more space than offered within this article, however; suffice it to say that the organizational story of *g* and *tm* activism on behalf of women's rights is universally thin. There are however some wonderful exceptions of individuals: I think, for example, of Mario Pecheny, of U Buenos Aires, Argentina; Vasu Reddy of the Human Sciences Research Council, South Africa; Robert Hamblin of GenderDynamiX. There must be many more. A different point – but one that must be noted – is that it is silly to over-homogenize the shape of *g*-identities, politics, and experience, especially in African contexts where the tolerance for visible gay livelihood is minimal. The point is simply that *lgbti* justice advocacy demands rethinking masculinities; the notion of "men" as "always-prone-to-violence" or "not-really-men, ie.gay/transmen" doesn't carry us far enough to encompass the meanings of *lgbti* experiences.

15. The harassment against intersexed people is spread throughout all gender and sexual 'identity' categorizations: men, women, gay, lesbian, transmen, transwomen; intersexuality glosses such a wide array of possibilities of body, life-gender choice (mostly enforced), desire, political challenge, that in many ways, it could be seen to stand as the *Ur* category for the purpose of illuminating the

violence of conventional gender and sexual systematicities.

16. In   November, the Ugandan Minister of Ethics and Integrity, Hon Buturo, cancelled a conference of sex workers, to be hosted by Akina Mama wa Afrka, because sex workers were deemed a "criminal' constituency and could not legally meet – see www.mask.co.za

17. There are, of course, individuals and organizations who have worked very hard against this tide, forming for example, the extraordinary consortium which created the Yogyakarta Principles, see www.yogyakartaprinciples.org

18. To my mind, analyses which draw on dichotomized notions of power sometimes remain valuable, still (such as, for example, in understanding rape; and the meaning of racism is hard to theorize without dichotomies).

19. Personal communication, Kasha, Jacqueline, Freedom and Roam, Uganda

20. See Special issue *Pambazuka*, 506, November, 2010; www.pambazuka.org

21. Such struggles especially include resources of space, funding, and access to the media.

22. Oyeronke Oyewumi has, controversially, suggested pre-colonial Yoruba shows linguistic evidence of gender categorization completely free of the meaning of dichotomized power – although there are interesting debates here (see Bibi Bakare-Yusuf in Arnfred, S. et al., 2004), I am not attempting to rehearse her argument, but to suggest that contemporary debates on gender and sexuality encourage us to eschew fundamentalist equations between forms of gender, lives of sexualities, and power.

Domestic Violence in the African North
Fatima Sadiqi, University of Fez

Introduction

Theories, debates and activism on sexual health and rights have travelled with reasonable speed in North Africa in the past three decades or so and considerable headway has been achieved on this front (see Chaouachi, 1997; Charrad, 2001; Sadiqi, 2008; Ennaji and Sadiqi *forthcoming*). However, although related, questions of domestic violence, which may also include sexual assault and rape, have been rather side-lined theoretically, in spite of the fact that activism and legal reform work remain strong in the region, and in spite of the fact that gender-based violence is considered essential to the most fundamental provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW).[1] This regression in theoretical work on domestic violence in the region has resulted in lack of action on the part of policy-makers.

One can understand that the issue of domestic violence is generally eschewed by the policies promoting gender equality in the region as such policies are blind to what is undertaken in the private sphere, generally considered not political because not economically productive. But academic theory on the topic cannot make any headway without focusing on the private with the aim of rendering it public. Indeed, although it is true that law and family constitute only one element of the broader constellation of gender relations and institutions, it is a crucial and understudied one. In other words, while North Africa has witnessed deep social, economic and political transformations in the last three decades, there is need to reopen the old debates on domestic violence in new ways that address these new transformations. It should be noted at this juncture that the overall status of women in this part of the world is rather privileged in comparison to those of many Arab and Muslim countries. A number of questions may be raised in this respect: Are the theoretical debates

on domestic violence in the 70s and 80s still valid for the present times? What impact do the significant advances on the legal, economic and political fronts have on these debates? What role could the changing notion of the family, perceived as a central safe haven in North African societies, have on these debates?

In an attempt to answer these questions, this paper is organized as follows: Section 1 presents the changing nature of the family in the region and Section 2 looks at the state of affairs with regard to domestic violence in the African North. The last section presents new ways of dealing with domestic violence but concludes that much is still to be done.

The changing nature of the family in North Africa

Domestic violence is closely related to the nature and structure of the family. North African societies are deeply patriarchal and the family space has always functioned as the realm of male dominance over women and children. Such family spaces were often households sheltering members of the extended family with the father or grandfather as the head figure. In these societies, men decide to marry, not women; women are "given" in marriage. Further, within the North African family structure, the rule is to "correct" children with the aim of "upbringing and educating" them (there is only one term for both in Arabic: *rbbi*). Consequently, it is natural to hit children and women with the aim of "correcting" them.

This cultural given started to change with women's education and salaried job-taking. The independence of the Maghrebian countries was accompanied with massive scholarisation of girls in urban areas. Women's education, women's work have been accompanied by a gradual transformation of households into nuclear families sheltering parents and children. The transition from bigger to smaller families has had its challenges: various types of violence accompanied the new gender negotiations within the family. In 2003, Fouzia Ghissassi and Moulay R'Chid edited a book where a number of Moroccan university teachers and professors gave testimonies of domestic abuse. Granting that domestic violence is a universal phenomenon that has been attested in the cultural histories of all nations, talking about it, especially in educated circles, is still taboo.

In the last decade or so, the result of a combination of economic crises, unemployment, and a superficial form of religiosity led to a crisis of masculinity in the Maghreb, a fact which resulted in more domestic

violence. The North African family has long been described as a patriarchal unit, and it has been noted that Muslim family laws have served to reinforce patriarchal gender relations and women's subordinate position within the family. Again, granting that patriarchy is universal and multi-faceteted, Arab-Muslim patriarchy is space-based and takes the family as its abode. Whereas mainstream Western patriarchies are more public and based on the "ideal image of a woman", Arab-Muslim patriarchy is more "private". As such, it considers the family, kin ties and women's reproductive capacities as "essential" and "natural". The emphasis on biology has led to reductionist and functionalist accounts of the family that we find in both Arab-Muslim and mainstream Western societies. In both societies, the family serves to socialize children into society's normative system of values and provide an emotional environment that will ensure a psychologically protective environment for the (male) worker/breadwinner. In both types of society, these functions are carried out by the wife and mother.

It is for these reasons that in modern North African societies, the role of women and the family are striking. Marriage and family are central to social reproduction. It is also at this juncture that religion and culture intermingle to the extent that the two melt into one. For example, the Egyptian Islamist Seyid Qutb described the family as "the nursery of the future which breeds precious human products under the guardianship of women". In this context, a woman primarily functions as a wife and mother and a man as breadwinner and authority in the private and public spaces (Choueiri, 1990: 127-8). It is this authority that sanctions domestic violence on the cultural level.

On the other hand, domestic violence may have roots that transcend the boundaries of the family. The state, for example, may directly or indirectly monitor domestic violence through its own mechanisms. Studies have shown that state-building in the Maghreb has been based on family regulation (Charrad, 2010). The state's grip on the family is channelled through the regulation of marriage registration and the laws which differ according to societies (Sadiqi, 2008). In addition, states devise laws regulating women's reproductive rights as well as family disintegration (divorce, death, etc.). In brief, the family is not an enclave in its relationship with the state and it is in the fine line between the private space and the public space that the relationship between the two resides.

The State of Affairs with Regard to Domestic Violence in North Africa

Morocco

Of the three countries of the Maghreb, Morocco fares best in its dealings with domestic violence. However, the road is still long as the following facts show. [2] Article 490 of the penal code criminalizes extramarital sex for women, calling for punishments ranging from one month to one year in jail. These cases are rarely taken to court, since a conviction depends on either eyewitness testimony or a confession by one of the perpetrators. An unmarried woman's pregnancy is proof of sexual relations and may lead to criminal prosecution, while the fault of her male partner is not established by law. Further, no laws specifically prohibit domestic violence, though general prohibitions against assault found within the penal code are theoretically applicable to such situations. Physical abuse is grounds for divorce, but the wife must be able to call on witnesses to support her claims (See Article 100 of the Moudawana). If she is unable to prove her case, the authorities will return a woman to her abuser's home, leaving her in a worse situation than before she filed the complaint. Consequently, few women report domestic abuse. Sexual assault and rape are both criminalized under the penal code, although spousal rape is not. The maximum sentence for each crime is five years in prison. Given prevailing societal concepts of personal and family honour, victims of sexual violence rarely come forward for fear of shaming their families.

As for "honour killings," in which women are murdered by family members for perceived sexual or moral transgressions, they do occur in Morocco but are rather rare compared with some other countries in the region. As with other forms of gender-based violence, honour killing is traditionally seen as a private issue, meaning police are rarely summoned and are hesitant to intervene. Article 475 of the penal code stipulates that a kidnapper or seducer of a minor girl can be acquitted if he marries her.

Although prohibited under Article 184a and Article 184b of the penal code, prostitution is common, especially in urban centres. However, the government neither prosecutes nor protects women who have been coerced into providing sexual services. Trafficking in persons, particularly in child maids, is a problem.

In principle, women are protected from gender-based and discriminatory arrest, detention, and exile. Article 10 of the constitution formally protects

all people from arbitrary arrest and detention (Article 10 states: "(1) No one can be arrested, detained, or punished except in the cases and forms provided by law. (2) The home is inviolable. There can be no searches or inspection except under the conditions and the forms provided by the law.") In practice, however, women may be singled out for arrest when they are deemed to behave immodestly, particularly in rural communities.

In a move that bore both symbolic and substantive meaning for women in Morocco, the government announced on December 10, 2008, the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, that it would lift all reservations to CEDAW (Democratic Association of Moroccan Women, "The Withdrawal of the Reservations to CEDAW by Morocco," news release, December 17, 2008).[3]

When it ratified the convention in 1993, Morocco, like many other Arab and Muslim countries, made multiple reservations and declarations covering portions that were thought to conflict with Islamic or national law. The reservations include provisions such as Article 9, which relates to the transmission of nationality to children, and Article 16, regarding the equality of men and women's marital rights. The king declared that the reservations were "obsolete" in light of the progressive legislation adopted in recent years. The public proclamations regarding their removal created a stronger legal basis for additional progress on women's rights issues, and carried a political and universal message that was widely applauded by civil society (Sarah Touahri, "Morocco Retracts CEDAW Reservations," Magharebia, December 17, 2008).[4]

The government and the media did not adequately explain the content of the convention or the implications of the decision to withdraw the reservations. However, the Moroccan Association of Human Rights and similar organizations are determined to ensure that CEDAW is fully implemented and that all discrimination against women is eradicated.

Women victims of spousal violence are not well protected by the law or the society. Women often have difficulty providing evidence of domestic violence, as they usually lack witnesses and their word is not given much weight by the authorities. The Ministry of Social Development, Family, and Solidarity began publishing official data on violence against women in late 2007. In March 2008, the ministry responded to an upsurge in reported incidents by announcing an action plan to increase the number of support centres for victims and to prepare a draft bill that would specifically outlaw violence against women. According to the ministry, some 17,000 incidents of gender-

based violence were reported in the first three months of 2008 alone, 78.8 percent of which were committed by the victims' husbands (Sarah Touahri, "Morocco Seeks to Criminalize Violence Against Women," Magharebia, April 1, 2008).[5] Violence against women instigated by men under the strain of financial difficulties is also on the rise (Amina Barakat, "Renewed Efforts to End Violence Against Women," Inter Press Service, March 17, 2009).[6]

In February 2007, the Ministry of Social Development, Family, and Solidarity presented a draft bill offering a legal framework for protecting women's rights by providing safe spaces for women victims of violence. If a woman is a victim of violence perpetrated by her employer, she will be provided with a safe harbor in her workplace and, depending on her condition, given reduced work hours or temporary cessation of work. Support networks and shelters for abused women started to appear in big cities like Casablanca, Rabat, and Fes in 2002.

On February 2, 2009, the Union for Women's Action and the Anaruz network launched an initiative to organize public forums aimed at sensitizing local communities to the plight of women victims of violence, set up "listening centres" where abused women are encouraged to speak about their traumatic experiences, and created a free telephone hotline to give legal help and counseling to women. A victim can either file a complaint with the court or, if she can afford it, hire a lawyer to handle the case.

The media play a role in raising awareness of violence toward women and showcasing the activities of civil society groups on the issue. There is debate in the media and within society about the creation of rehabilitation centres where violent men would be helped to control their behavior and psychological problems. Investigative reports and advertisements regarding violence against women are aired on television, and guests on talk shows are invited to discuss the topic. Gender-based violence outside the home is still a reality. However, societal taboos prevent women from coming forward to report sexual violence, and the police and medical personnel are not trained to deal with such issues. Sexual harassment on the streets has decreased but is still a problem.

Women's rights groups and other civil society actors work freely and effectively to improve the status of women's personal autonomy and security. Their activities include national and international networking, tending directly to the victims of violence, and campaigns aimed at sensitizing the general public to the issues surrounding gender-based violence and implementation

of the family law. The impact of these efforts has been tremendous, but they must be increased in rural and semi-urban areas.

The mainstream media do not reflect the real progress made by women, and rarely use gender-sensitive language. Although they have attempted to tackle issues such as sexual harassment, domestic violence, and gender roles, these efforts have been insufficient. There is a proliferation of magazines in Arabic and French that focus on women's interests, but they tend to be geared toward elite and educated women. Rural and semi-urban women are marginalized in the media generally due to poverty and illiteracy.

Poverty has a disproportionate effect on women. Although welfare is available to divorcees and widows, it is not offered to single mothers as such. Even in instances where they are entitled to welfare, poor or illiterate women often have difficulty maintaining the necessary paperwork and making frequent visits to the relevant offices. Although women have the right to housing and the same legal opportunity to obtain housing as men, very few own their own residence in practice. The 2004 family law obliges a husband to house his wife during marriage and during the waiting period before a final divorce, either in the marital home or a suitable substitute. Article 53 of the family law states that if either spouse unjustifiably evicts the other spouse from the marital home, the public prosecutor will intervene on behalf of the evicted to spouse and "shall take all necessary measures for his or her safety and protection." However, reports indicate that authorities are slow to implement this measure and that women are having difficulty proving that they were expelled from the house. Additionally, a father must provide financial maintenance, including housing, to his minor children, even if they are in the divorced mother's custody. However, there is no guarantee that the wife will retain the marital home after a divorce is finalized, and husbands often use personal connections and bribery to avoid a court ruling to that effect.

Women's rights NGOs have been very active in alleviating the plight of poor and illiterate women. Their work is encouraged by the government, and the positive effects are apparent. For example, groups like Feminine Solidarity and Bayti (My House) have been catering to women in financial distress and single mothers. Meanwhile, through investments in rural roads, other infrastructure, and social programs, the government is attempting to improve the life of the rural population as a whole, although these efforts are still very insufficient: paved roads, running water, and schools are still luxuries for most of the

countryside in Morocco. The poverty rate in rural areas dropped from 36 percent in 2004 to 21 percent in 2007, according to the findings of a survey by the High Commissioner for Planning, but work to alleviate poverty is still sorely needed.

There exist around 100 counselling and listening centres in Morocco. These centres help women victims of domestic violence cope with their tragedies by providing legal, psychological and social support. The role of these centres is also to organize sensitizing campaigns against domestic violence, formation seminars and follow-ups of women victims of domestic violence. These centres were initiated by the Anaruz network. Established in April 2004 following a consensus workshop that brought together several organizations and counselling centres in Morocco, the Anaruz network counts now 39 centres located throughout the country.

The various bulletins of Anaruz and counselling centres show that domestic violence has the lion's share of the violence impacted on women in Morocco, an average of 74%, says an Anaruz report on violence based on gender, which covered the period September 2005/October 2006. In this report, other forms of violence cover institutional violence (8.8%), violence outside marriage (6.8%), societal violence (4.4%) and domestic violence (4.2%). Regarding domestic violence itself, the report notes that violence against the rights of women represents the largest percentage, 43, 6%, including the deprivation of family expenditure represents a large percentage (58.4%) followed by physical abuse (30.4%). Concerning violence against women's rights outside of marriage, the report states that societal violence is one of the most important forms of physical violence directed against women (33, 9%), followed by rape and sexual harassment, which occupy the top spots in this percentage, respectively 57.7% and 42.3%.

To remedy this situation, the report underlines the need to criminalize violence against women generally and domestic violence in particular. It thus activates the role of prosecutor to ensure the protection of a divorced woman's right when she returns to the matrimonial home. The report also calls for the establishment of shelters and the spread of listening centres nationwide, in addition to coordination between the government and women's groups, as well as the human rights groups with the aim of producing a comprehensive national report on violence against women that binds all the parties involves.

In parallel, the Global Rights in Morocco, in collaboration with partner NGOs from various regions across the country, launched a campaign of

legislative advocacy through two new tools: a poster called "Penalties, Privacy, No Tolerance: Claims of women for a law against violence", and a discussion booklet that accompanies it. These tools are intended for local NGOs in their advocacy for women's rights in Morocco. The poster illustrates twelve reasons for a comprehensive law on violence against women, with texts simplified in French, Arabic and Tifinagh. The discussion booklet explains the rationale for these proposals, provides statistics and testimonies of women, and provides concrete examples of legislation that are contained in the framework for model legislation on violence in the family and interpersonal relations, based on the UN stance on the issue of violence against women. The result is 161 consultation sessions in 35 towns and villages with 1836 women in their communities to solicit their suggestions and priorities for national legislation on violence against women. Local artists have worked with women to create drawings illustrating their claims. The twelve themes identified by women in legislative reforms on the civil and the criminal law are: Expel the perpetrator's home; No mediation in domestic violence cases; Provide support during conflict relating to domestic violence; Issue protective orders against perpetrators; Develop a writing document of any scene of domestic violence suspect; increase penalties for domestic violence; Criminalizing marital rape, Criminalize all forms of sexual harassment; Prosecution of domestic violence without resorting to witness; Empower the police to intervene immediately in case of domestic violence; Penalize even minor offenses in cases of domestic violence, increase penalties for repeated acts of domestic violence. Pursuant to that, Global Rights and its partners distributed 2,000 copies of the poster and booklet for discussion across the country. During this campaign, the 10 partner NGOs organized public meetings in their communities with local decision makers, parliamentary representatives, authorities, hospital staff and staff of the justice system to present the poster and the discussion paper.

On the ground, the most important centre that treats domestic violence against women is Nejma. During the months of January and February 2010, around 270 domestic violence cases were tackled by Nejma, in addition to 274 cases ranging over phone calls, emails or fax messages, most of which suffering from psychological violence[7]. Five types of domestic violence are reported: psychological violence (58%), economic and social violence (17%), corporal violence (15%), legal violence (6%) and sexual violence (5%).

According to women's stories, the most important motive for going to the centre is a desire to release their feelings towards violence that they have

been holding for years. The major reasons which keeps them from going to the centre are their inability to confront society especially in cases of rape or sexual harassment, fear of homelessness and destitution in cases of poor and jobless women with children. This category of women have recourse to the logics of "patience" and "taboo" (so valued in Moroccan culture[8]), a fact which deepens the problem. Another reason is women's conviction that their private life should remain their own whatever the impact of violence on their lives. Another reason is women's reluctance to ask legal advice because of lack of trust in the law and the institutions related to it.

The main problems that these centres face is securing proof that rape took place and hence protecting the victim, and the impossibility of finding witnesses given the nature of the circumstances in which rape takes place. This lets many rapists escape punishment. Here is a case reported by Nejma: a 22 year old woman was stopped by a man with a butcher's knife and was led to a secluded place. She was raped and taken to the rapist's home where she was kept for 3 days. During this time, the young woman was repeatedly beaten and raped. Upon her release, she presented a complaint to the court. However, in spite of her physical state and the doctor's certificate, she was not given justice because of lack of witnesses. The rapist got 3 months without prison.

In other cases, the victims of rape are often seen as the criminals, or at least as the ones who provoked violence by the way they dress, talk, look. In these cases the abuser is seen as a victim who committed his crime without "meaning to" do it.

On May 15, 2010, a draft law was presented to the government and the official criminalisation of domestic violence is imminent. This opens a window of hope although it will probably take some time to be implemented on the ground.

Algeria

Violence overshadowed Algeria for nearly a half-century. A million lives were lost in the battle for independence from France in 1962, and another 150,000 to 200,000 people were slaughtered in a brutal civil war that followed the annulment of 1992 elections, though trouble has subsided since 2003. In Algeria, domestic violence is still a legal, and a social, problem. Facts show that some 7,400 women filed domestic violence complaints in Algeria in 2009, 1,555 more than in 2004, according to the law enforcement agency that handles such cases. According to Belala, referring to the Berber-speaking

nomads who live in the Sahara region:

> "Violence against women is a pervasive problem in Algeria. It touches
> all social classes and all regions, except in the extreme south where the
> Tuaregs banish men who rape women."

SOS Woman, an Algerian NGO set up some 15 years ago, was the first group
to publicly denounce domestic violence against women. This was a pioneer
act in Algeria's modern history. According to this group, although domestic
violence is increasing in Algeria, victims still fear scandal and, thus avoid
taking cases to the police or the court. The spokesperson of this group said:

> "Victims talk to us anonymously on the phone. We get hundreds of
> calls from women who complain of being sodomized or forced to do
> things they are not morally comfortable with."

Tunisia

Gender equality has been inscribed in the Tunisian government policies since
1956[9], making the status and position of women in this country a privileged
one. However, the implementation of this gender equality is still a challenge
in this country. So far as domestic violence is concerned, the Tunisian official
discourse does not consider it a social phenomenon, but a rare occurrence.
However, according to the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural
Rights (1999), domestic violence, including sexual violence, battering and
other physical and psychological violence, is widespread in Tunisia; what is
rare is official data on this phenomenon. On the other hand, the 1999 edition
of Collectif Maghreb Egalité revealed many cases of threats and intimidation
within the confines of marriage. For example, it has reported the case of a 49
year old mother of 6 children who had been married for 30 years and who was
subjected to physical, psychological and sexual violence throughout the 30
years of marriage. This woman filed a case against her husband in 1979 but
had to withdraw her case when her husband was arrested and held in custody
for a week. This woman was beaten by her husband in 1998 demanding
that she leave her job. The woman left her home and presented a medical
certificate showing her injuries, but her husband asked for divorce on the
ground that his wife deserted the family home.

The only Tunisian association which runs a shelter for abused women is the
Tunisian Association of Democratic Women (ATFD). In 2001, this association
issued a report on women victims of domestic violence. According to this report,
most women who seek shelter in AFTD are beaten either by their husbands/

partners or by a male member of their extended family. As in the Moroccan case, the main reasons that push women not to report violence are economic dependence and lack of self esteem. As for the official stance on domestic violence, the Tunisian state prefers to leave it to the extended family.

On the legal front, domestic violence is dealt with in Article 218 of the Tunisian Penal Code. An amendment was introduced on this article in 1993, according to which penalties when an assault is committed by one spouse against another or in cases where the assault is committed by a parent on a child than are heavier. According to the Tunisian Penalty Code, the penalty for domestic violence under article 218 is imprisonment for two years and a fine of 2,000 dinars with the sanctions being increased to three years' imprisonment and a fine of 3,000 dinars if it was carried out with premeditation. In situations where the spouse or child victim decides to withdraw the case, the article stipulates that the proceedings, trial or enforcement of the penalty shall be discontinued.

New ways of dealing with domestic violence?

The nature of domestic violence as well as of its causes has changed in the last few decades. Today, domestic violence is considered by many outside the Islamic world to be a problem in Muslim-majority cultures. Ways of dealing with violence have also changed in accordance with the overall historical and socio-economic context, as well as with the advent of the internet and cyber media. There is no consensus among scholars as to the relationship between Islam and domestic violence. The debate among religious leaders and Islamic scholars in this domain focuses on whether there is religious evidence that a man may beat his wife. Forms of beating wives under specific circumstances are explicit in the *Qur'an,* especially *An-Nisa, 34*. Some scholars think that beating is the last resort and should not result in physical injury. Verse 34 of *an-Nisa* is one of the most important verses for the husband and wife relationship in Islam. In most translations, it gives permission to men to beat/hit (they both have the same word in Arabic) their wives if they fear "rebellion," or "*nushûz*". Many interpretive problems have arisen regarding the occasions (if any) on which beating is appropriate, the type of beating prescribed, and whether beating remains discountenanced even if acceptable.

However, in North African societies, very little is reported on domestic violence. Women are ashamed of showing their bruises or complaining to authorities about their husbands. Such complaints are culturally considered

as breaches of the Code of Honour and may harm their own families. Studies on this specific aspect are badly needed, and statistics of beaten women are very difficult to find.

Conclusion

Theorizing domestic violence in North Africa has always been difficult. At a time when technology is pulling down the frontiers between the private and the public spaces, violence has not decreased; on the contrary it is finding new reasons: the shrinking of family size, less interference from the extended family, stress, and so on. Some headway has been achieved at the level of policy-making in Morocco but the road is still long before the taboo surrounding domestic violence is infiltrated.

References

Charrad, M. 2010., in Sadiqi and Ennaji (eds), *Women in the Middle East and North Africa. Agents of Change.* London: Routledge

Dobash E, R., & P. Dobash.1992. *Women, Violence and Social Change*, 222-23, 225, 229-32 London: Routledge

Ennaji, M. and F. Sadiqi (eds) (forthcoming in 2011), *Gender and Violence in the Middle East.* London: Routledge.

Ganley, J. & S. Schechter. 1995. *Domestic Violence: A National Curriculum for Family Preservation Practitioners* 19

Klein, J et al. 1997. *Ending Domestic Violence: Changing Public Perceptions/Halting the Epidemic* 6

Paymar, M. 1994. *Building a Coordinated Community Response to Domestic Violence: An Overview of the Problem* 3-4.

Sadiqi, F. 2003. *Women, Gender and Language in Morocco.* Leiden and Boston: Brill Academic Publishers.

Sadiqi, F. 2008. "Facing Challenges and Pioneering Feminist and Gender Studies: Women in Post-colonial and Today's Maghrib". In *Journal of African and Asian Studies* (AAS) 7. Leiden: Brill Academic Publishers 447-470.

Sadiqi, F. 2010. "Women's Rights in the Middle East and North Africa. Morocco. An Analytical Assessment of the 2004-2009 Period". The Freedom House. New York: Spring 2010.

Zorza, J. 2002. "Batterer Manipulation and Retaliation in the Courts: A Largely Unrecognized Phenomenon Sometimes Encouraged by Court Practices, Violence Against Women" 47-48

UNICEF 2000, *Domestic Violence Against Women and Girls,* 6 Innocenti Digest 1, 7

Endnotes

1. In 1992, the Committee on CEDAW formally affirmed that violence against women constitutes a violation of internationally recognised human rights, regardless of whether the perpetrator is a public official or a private person. CEDAW was adopted by the General Assembly in 1979 and entered into force in 1981. The countries of North Africa signed CEDAW, two of them without reservations.

2. The information about Morocco in this section is taken from "Women's Rights in the Middle East and North Africa, Morocco (2010). An Analytical Assessment of the 2004-2009 Period". New York: The Freedom House. New York: Spring 2010.

3. http://www.euromedrights.net/pages/556/news/focus/68402.

4. http://www.magharebia.com/cocoon/awi/xhtml1/en_GB/features/awi/features/2008/12/17/feature-02.

5. http://www.magharebia.com/cocoon/awi/xhtml1/en_GB/features/awi/features/2008/04/01/feature-01.

6. http://ipsnews.net/africa/nota.asp?idnews=46150.

7. The information and statistics in this section are taken from the Nejmanews belletin, published by the ADFM (Association Démocratique des Femmes du Maroc), No 1, April 2010.

8. See Sadiqi, 2003.

9. Habib Bourguiba, the first Tunisian president after independence in 1956 is credited with the inscription of women's rights in Tunisia.

Women's Activism and Transformation: Arising from the Cusp

Anu Pillay, Head of Mission, Medica Mondiale, Liberia

Introduction

Development, change, transformation are all fields of relationships between people (Giri, 2002). As such, much theorization from feminists across the world has emphasized the importance of the politics of such relationships, in order to understand motivations and the development of the "self" and "others" as part and parcel of the the development of policy. The broadening of concerns in policy development has often, however, lacked a parallel effort to deepen feminist theory on the terms of the diverse relationships we create. Little attention is paid to the fundamental ability to empathise, cooperate, listen and reach out from the heart. This gap is central and Giri, amongst others, advocates that without emphasising self transformation, we cannot adequately address the problems we seek to transform. All activist and feminist work is greatly strengthened – and in most cases requires – the transformation of the self as an essential step in breaking through the barriers of injustices.

I want to argue that women's activism in many instances has demonstrated a way of working which mirrors Freire's concept of Praxis and a deeper form – Praxis Intervention. While a commitment to Praxis emphasizes the need for a constant cycle of conceptualizing the meanings of what can be learned from experience in order to reframe strategic and operational models, Praxis Intervention emphasizes working on the Praxis potential (practical wisdom or phronesis) of its participants. It prioritizes unsettling the settled mentalities, especially where the settled mindsets prevalent in the social world or individuals are suspected to have sustained or contributed to suffering or marginality (Madhu, 2005). In other words, this approach to change emphasizes turning the internal and external worlds upside down

and inside out to bring about *transformation* rather than reconstruction or reorganization of known concepts.

This has been an almost inevitable methodological approach for women and women's activism to deal with the injustices of gender inequality, where activism has recognized the complexities of violence as constitutive realities within women's lives. Wars, conflicts and social upheavals have often provided the opportunity for this to happen (Meintjes et al., 2001). Where the "old order" is fundamentally disturbed, in times of conflict and social upheaval, women from all walks of life have been known to respond to crisis, conflict, and intense violence (Barry, 2005). These responses have been different in different contexts but the impact of the women rising up has at times been phenomenal. Where many have fled, often it is women who are found to be addressing immediate healthcare issues, establishing informal education systems, working with survivors of violence and offering advice and providing services and support. Some cross borders, and work in refugee camps to alleviate suffering and negotiate access with armed actors. At the cessation of open armed conflict, women turn to re-establishing critical services, aiding return and reconstruction processes, ensuring access to justice and supporting political and economic development. In some unique cases, women have forced peace agreements to be signed or shut down the illegal sale of alcohol through their organized and coordinated efforts to radically change a violent and dangerous context.

These events and activities have happened organically for the most part and are often driven by a single change agent with a burning desire to see the change happening, largely due to personal experience of the injustice. My question then is how can we be more systematic about driving change, especially within violent contexts?

Bruce Mau, the designer suggests:

"Our work is to solve problems, not merely to state the fact that there is a problem, or point the finger at who caused the problem, or throw stones at the people that benefit from the problem...The single most radical action we can take, the most critical and revolutionary, is to invent a new and better way to do things. A way that changes the world and proves the limits of the old way by demonstrating new means of thinking and being." (Mau, 2004: 56)

This quotation resonated with the learnings that I have gained from my work as a gender and peace activist in South Africa, India and Liberia. I am part

of each of these processes and my transformative journey intersects with the actors as they strive to find new meanings and to bring about significant changes in their worlds. As I observed and documented their work, reflecting on how change comes about in the cusp of experience and action, I too am transformed.

In this article, I describe and analyse women's activism where I have encountered it in these three settings. From the self analysis and personal transformation processes in each setting I reflect on the key success factors for the transformation that came about. I look at the response to violence against women in South Africa, then the interfaith work spearheaded by women in India and lastly community mobilization and transformation in Liberia. From these experiences I highlight the capacity building potential for future work with women activists.

Personal experiences as drivers of change

My encounter with gender activism in South Africa was triggered firstly by my own experience of violence. I grew up in the 60's in East London with a childhood friend, Lesley Ann Foster, and we both went on to marry and live with violently abusive partners. This was a common situation in our community which was not challenged by us ourselves or by our families. As our lives separated into adulthood, we were unaware that our experiences were running on parallel lines until we shared, when we reached our thirties, the experiences of how both our childhoods and lives as young women had been shadowed by shame, secrecy, abuse and sexual exploitation. It spurred us both into gender activism. Our experiences of domestic violence not only made us acutely aware of the social acceptance of violence against women but alerted us to the utter lack of social mechanisms to deal with the problem. When we tried to report the matter to the police we were both individually met with resistance if not outright mockery from male police personnel from the clerks to the officers. We found out that there was no legislation in place to protect women and no services that we knew of in our communities and in our towns to assist women who were being violated in their homes and elsewhere. South Africa was in fact, a violent place for women without recourse through the social or legal system.

I left East London to work in Johannesburg and found People Opposing Women Abuse which I joined 1993 first as a volunteer, then as a lay counselor. I then became a board member and chair of the board and later joined the

organization as deputy director. In 1995 POWA initiated and co-coordinated the first national conference on Violence against Women. Lesley Ann was inspired and in 1996, we set up Masimanyane Women's Support Centre in East London. Fourteen years later, we are both still running that organization and have reached out locally, nationally and internationally to bring violence against women onto the public radar. Our work over the fourteen years of its operation has led us to reflect deeply on the status of women in society, why men are violent towards women and more importantly, how do we build women's capacity to challenge injustices at every level of their lives?

Causes of violence: patriarchy, religion, lack of political will and policies

What we know is that the patriarchal system is deeply embedded in South African society regardless of race or class. Clients at Masimanyane range from very poor rural women to affluent white women, often both being hospitalized in neighbouring beds in the Intensive Care Unit at the local hospital in East London. This has happened so often that the organization is now considering setting up a desk at the hospital to ensure that women coming in with suspicious injuries can be assisted immediately and their cases taken up while they are recovering. Medical personnel tend not to investigate the cause of injuries unless the women ask for help and report the perpetrator. South Africa also does not have a health policy to guide the health sector (Vetten, 2005). The obligation of medical personnel to investigate and report cases of violence against women is thus still an unresolved and complicated issue. Studies show that mandatory reporting does not increase the level of medical personnel reporting cases of domestic violence because it often deters women from seeking medical assistance (Sachs, 2000).

We also know that religion plays a large role in perpetuating dangerous situations for women through the secondary status of women in all major religions. We participated in doing a documentary on South African women in religious communities and it revealed that Hindu, Muslim, Catholic, Jewish and African indigenous religions all perceived women as inferior to men, with restrictions and rules placed on reproductive cycles and all denied access to women to take up any significant seat of power within the religious system. Religious bodies have not come out strongly against violence and are often at the forefront of resisting change and the advancement of gender equality as going against religious ordainments.

As women activists in South Africa, we largely agree that progressive laws, a Constitution that guarantees equal status, and even a political leadership that has accepted women's role in nation building does not add up to a society where women feel free, where women are safe, where women have the chance to realise their full potential. Today, the biggest oppression that the majority of women in the country face is that of violence, at home and on the street. South Africa has one of the highest rates of domestic violence and of rape in the world (Vetten, 2005). In addition, HIV/AIDS afflicts as many women as men. But it is the violence that ultimately tells on women's lives regardless of whether they are enmeshed in the poverty that predominates amongst women or they are the ones who have successfully broken through the glass ceiling and are at the top of the corporate ladder. As People Opposing Women Abuse (POWA) observed "We've fallen into the trap of formal equality, of saying we have women business and political leaders, but too many women still go home to violence and / or oppression" (Shelver, 2006 quoted in Pillay, 2006).

There has been an awareness of the need for national co-ordination in recent years. This awareness led to the formation of three central national organizations – the Network of Violence against Women, the Reproductive Rights Alliance and the South African Gender-Based Violence Health Initiative.

In 1995, the first national conference on violence against women was held in Cape Town to mark November 25th as the day of no violence against women and to bring women from all over the country together to discuss the issue of VAW and to form the National Network on Violence against Women at a national and regional level. This had come about after months of meetings between women's organizations like POWA, Rape Crisis, ADAPT and others to try to raise the profile of VAW in the country and to form the NNVAW to be the voice nationally and regionally for lobbying and advocacy on behalf of the members. All this developed after participation at the Beijing conference earlier that year and the heightened awareness of VAW in the aftermath of apartheid. Gender equality issues had taken a back seat during the struggle for racial equality and the end of apartheid opened the space for women to bring forth long suppressed injustices that had been perpetrated against them and were still occurring in the aftermath, if not at a worse level. One of the studies that POWA participated in which I presented at the Beijing conference was on femicide, a new term that came to our attention from WILDAF[1] in Zimbabwe. WILDAF presented at the Dakar preparatory conference in 1994

on women killed by their intimate partners and when we did the study in Johannesburg, we came up with a figure of one women killed every 6 days by an intimate partner. With this growing awareness of the insecurity of women's lives in South Africa, let alone the rising statistics of incidences of domestic violence, we formed the NNVAW.

Fresh out of years of oppression, the Network members tried to create a participatory and democratically based forum for member organizations to pool their resources and to speak with one voice about the many forms of violence that were emerging from all parts of South Africa at that time. The network brought together all kinds of organizations from CBO's to Internationally funded NGOs with the idea of forming a broad based, far reaching coalition to end violence against women. The National Network on Violence against Women was formed with great enthusiasm and the expectation that it would become a national voice, working on behalf of regional and local organizations at the national level, creating a space for the voices of women on the ground to be heard at the highest levels in the country. This did not happen and South African women witnessed intense jostling for power amongst the people appointed to carry out this task, unilateral decisions being taken without consultation on the ground, territorialism, and insecurity around the devolution of power amongst many other ills that befell this initiative.

Despite that, South African women showed their incredible resilience, creativity and strength. The creation of Masimanyane is a case in providing evidence of what women can do when they are triggered to respond to injustice directed at themselves and/or at others. In 1998, Masimanyane organized nine organizations to come together to critique the South African government's first report to CEDAW and wrote a ground-breaking shadow report that spotlighted VAW for CEDAW. This shadow report laid the foundation for many other countries to follow and write shadow reports to CEDAW. It raised the issue of VAW to the committee but more importantly, it demonstrated the value of highlighting one issue and providing in-depth analysis and research to the committee to raise awareness and bring it into focus. This amongst many other initiatives and interventions and in partnership with other strong organizations like NISAA, POWA, and Rape Crisis has demonstrated that when women work together from the transformative space, their voices can be powerful and irrevocable.

India: interfaith journeys as transformative mechanisms

Searching for answers and examples of successful change, I arrived in India in September of 2005 at the Henry Martyn Institute (HMI) in Hyderabad, Andhra Pradesh. There I came across a project that was an attempt to find out if there was a "women's way" of dealing with interfaith conflict. For three consecutive years, HMI had put teams of women together, from different faiths, castes, class and cultures to find out how they would deal with difference, initially focused on religious difference, if they were in close contact with one another over a period of three weeks on a journey.

Diane D'Souza, formerly of the Henry Martyn Institute in India, describes the women's interfaith journey as an experiment to see what would happen if women took the initiative to shape interfaith dialogue in ways that they found most meaningful. The idea rose from the observation that women were largely absent from or marginalized in dominant inter-faith initiatives. The idea of the project began from dreaming about how the world might be if some of the stories in the bible were viewed from a different perspective. They asked "what if" Sarah's story was told and not Abraham's? Diane and others involved in putting this project together felt that asking "what if" opened a window through which they might see what insights women might bring to the questions of difference, divides, interfaith dialogue and peace. Through the magic of dreaming new paradigms, of telling stories, of getting from one point to another through a meandering, circuitous route they began the journey of discovering "what if" women were given the space to recover and rediscover ways of being, knowing and creating.

The project coalesced into creating traveling teams reminiscent of an ancient Indian method of teaching called "Gurukul" where the learning is through living together and learning from each other, not however with a single "guru" but rather with the idea each participant had something to learn and something to teach. The journeys further transformed from "interfaith" journeys into broader journeys of discovery covering issues of ethnicity, caste, race and class. They were designed to see what would happen when women approach interfaith dialogue in their own way. In the planning, the focus was on what would happen within the Journey itself; how women from diverse social and religious backgrounds would come together; how they would approach "interfaith dialogue"; what they would learn from meeting with different individuals and organizations, traveling in different countries; what the experience would teach them about their faith and the faith of others; and

how these insights might help to bring healing in the world.

It began with a gathering of eight women, four Canadians and four Indians who traveled together for three weeks in India and three weeks around Canada, to explore what would happen if women were given the chance to reflect on and shape interfaith dialogue themselves. Much learning emerged, largely emphasizing how women centralize relationships rather than structures and how the ordinary, everyday practicalities of life are woven into the process. The participants were encouraged to write and reflect on their experience of this experimental journey and the depth of their observations led to an expansion of the original idea to include using this methodology to gain deeper understandings about conflict and peace building.

In the context of an understanding that things are changing but perhaps too slowly, more groups of women set off on journeys to learn about the struggles of their sisters and to engage with the complexities of building understanding and hope. Each journey had a specific focus on selected situations of conflict and women's role in peace building activities.

The broad objectives of the journeys were to identify from women's perspectives, the underlying issues in existing conflicts; to discern the contribution of religious and spiritual identities to such conflicts, and to explore alternative models of peace-building that arise out of women's experiences and collaborations.

Thus the second journey saw eight women from warring communities from the northeast Indian state of Manipur going on a 'study'[2] tour for three weeks. The third and fourth journeys involved an India/Kenya traveling team and lastly a Sri Lanka/South Africa team. The India/Kenya group looked at issues of caste and land disputes, while the Sri Lanka /South Africa team focused on armed conflict, violence and racism.

Learnings – feminist re-visioning of interfaith dialogue as healing praxis

What emerged from the experience of the Journey Project in 1998 and 1999 were some unique insights into the contribution women have to make in healing the tensions that exist between people of different backgrounds in this suffering and war torn world.

This project was set apart from other initiatives in that it was a space which women shaped, created and defined almost wholly for themselves. This included making conscious decisions to move away from certain well worn

paths of 'interfaith dialogue' and to articulate and give shape to what female visions and models look like. A participant describes the environment created by the Journey experience thus, "It was a non-threatening environment, where the impetus came not from outside but from within, and the goals were evolved by self and group. The environment had snatches of a time before the formalization of religion, before the time of doctrines and theologies – when there were only people... It was an experience of moving out of boxes, away from labels, pigeonholes and stereotypes. We were not burdened by the weight of religion but were free to make this Journey our own."

Thus the women set the agenda and the result was an experience of moving away from divisive stereotypes creating a more nurturing environment in which explorations could be made and a sense of harmony created. One of the participants on one of the journeys commented that the journey itself created a microcosm of people challenged to live together across cultures, classes, races and individual differences through the persons of the participating women. It created an alternative form of dialogue through the paradoxes of differences and connectedness, of individual realities and universal experience and of pattern and detail. She says "this journey tells me how I may accept the other – not out of compulsion or force, but because as humans and as women, we share in common the belief that we are not all so similar and not all so different".

How does the experience of the Journey show a person how to accept "the other"? One aspect which seems central to this is the collective experience of a physical journey which created a new story of "we", speaking of common ground, common struggles and togetherness. This construction of the journeys with women of such difference with the focus on finding places where people are united instead of divided means that "the other" became part of the self through the tie of relationship. It confirmed that the forming of relationships is central to the process of understanding. In the environment of the Journey, women who might never have met or interacted came together in the environment of a "team" and in the process lasting relationships were formed. It is these relationships, this sustaining bond that brings about transformation in a person's thinking. One team member describes the change the experience of the Journey brought in her thinking when she listened to an invited guest subtly deriding Christians and Muslims: "I felt the hair rise on the back of my neck and I thought, "Don't go there!". You see it was no longer someone out there she was talking about... Those are my sisters. I know them. That's the

difference: before the Journey, the hair did not rise on the back of my neck. It rises now".

Capacity Building

What was also profoundly learned is that women together are not exempt from power dynamics nor do women deal with these challenges particularly differently from men. Without going too deeply into the challenges that power differentials created in the groups, they highlighted certain gaps in the design of the process. There was an unspoken assumption that women are different or essentially more able to deal with power dynamics differently. This meant that when the issues arose, they were not adequately dealt with which left many of the women who participated frustrated and angry. On one of the journeys, for example, a discussion about class difference arose and the Brahmin (upper caste) woman was singled out as representing the class of privilege and exploitation of others. This led to a deep divide between the women which was not completely resolved and showed up in the women's writings as having left a scar on their experience together. Being women did not assist these women to transcend the deep cultural and historical divisions which were between Brahmin and Dalit[3], Kuki and Naga[4], white and black South Africans, Singhalese and Tamil Sri Lankans. Although they shared the common low status of women in each of their contexts, the assumption that essential "womanness" was enough for women to deal with tensions, discounted the very real differences of class and of culture/ race.

For me this spoke of a capacity building gap which could have been included in the process to teach skills and practical tools to deal with deeper issues that arise in interpersonal engagement. It also raised the lack of ongoing engagement with these women after the journeys to debrief and air some of the grievances that had emerged but not been addressed.

I came into this process at the end and my role was to bring the women back together to discuss their experience and reflect upon what they had learned. The idea was that the participants in the journey would share their experiences with a wider group at an international conference. What became clear from these discussions was that essentialist notions of "a woman's way" had underpinned the journey project design from the outset and had coloured the way that the sessions had been implemented. Many of the women from the original groups expressed that they had been waiting for this opportunity to come back together to deal with some of the issues that had emerged

during the journeys. There was a strong feeling that while women may do things differently sometimes, it was not about there being a "women's way" of doing peace but about women bringing to the peace table their experiences and collective wisdom from where they stand in society. What women have are different experiences to men which shape their understanding and their commitment to peace. Thus the capacity building that would have helped them to deal with the conflicts that arose in the groups involved the personal level of self management and dealing with embedded beliefs and stereotypes of the other challenges, which are not peculiar to women.

The Women's Journey project ended with an International Conference and the development of a two-part radio programme that was put together to give voice to the women's experiences. It was a somewhat disjointed end to a long journey spanning over three years with many comings and goings of different participants and administrators. It provided however a powerful model of exploration which is, however, very expensive to replicate but could be done on a smaller scale using similar methodology and taking the gaps of capacity building into account.

Liberia: finally synthesis ...

In 2008, I went to Liberia as gender advisor to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Liberia (TRC) through my engagement with UNIFEM doing a review on Sierra Leone earlier that year. This deployment came up suddenly and within three weeks I arrived in Monrovia without a clear idea of how I would fulfill the mandate because the TRC was already at the end of its work after two years of operation. Since I had been advised by colleagues in the transitional justice sector to focus on capacity building with women in Liberia, I rewrote the terms of reference for the post in the absence of any structure at the Liberia office of UNIFEM. The design of the intervention was threefold: to assist the TRC with mainstreaming gender in their work, to ensure that a gender perspective was reflected in the final report and to engage with civil society organizations to build capacity to participate in the TRC process. The last point was the part I added in and turned out to be the most significant thing I did during this period.

What I found was that capacity building at the women NGO level in Liberia was mainly understood to be about running training workshops of two to three days on various skills or concepts. The women from a women's umbrella organization WONGOSOL (Women NGO Secretariat of

Liberia) had been to numerous trainings over the years but were still very under-capacitated to carry out the work that they needed to do. Writing, organizational, conceptual, administrative, and planning capacity was poor. While the women wanted to engage with the transitional justice process, they were not sure how to do it. Also, they were faced with political dynamics that they did not understand and they struggled to find a way to work with and around the Ministry of Gender and Development with unclear boundaries as to what was NGO work and what was the Ministry's work.

Capacity building thus became much more than merely running training workshops. We started off with a three day workshop using transformative learning tools adapted from the More to Life Programme, Yoga exercises and breathing techniques and used them to frame a learning process on transitional justice. For example we began with deep breathing as a way of centering and connecting to the self throughout the workshop. We did active listening exercises and drew life maps to go into the baggage that each person carried with them, especially their experiences of the war. We used art and dance to work through the feelings that emerged and learnt new language to express themselves with these forms. The group consisted of 15 potential trainers themselves, 12 women and 3 men with me as their coach. After the initial training we worked together as a team. I met them on a daily basis to talk about the work they wanted to do and how it could be done. This coaching method worked extremely well and the organization were able to benefit from my years of experience and expertise on gender, management, planning and administration. I mentored them on report writing, basic research skills, basic organizational planning and on strategic planning. I also worked with them on their interpersonal skills and on their group interaction using the M2L tools of noticing, listening, breathing and reflecting.

This participatory methodology which insisted on participation and engagement every minute of the process was well received by the women and the three men in the group. They said in the evaluations that they felt valued and that their contributions were important to the outcome so did not want to miss a minute of the process. We then together as a group designed a process for reaching out to community women nationwide to engage them around the transitional justice process. We created a facilitation guide, a reporting guide, a pre-post test and various other tools together to gather information from the women of Liberia which would feed into the TRC process as recommendations for the advancement of gender equality and to

address the needs of women and girls post conflict.

We then set out to hold four community dialogues in four regions of Liberia which covered the 15 counties. At the end, we reached in excess of 500 women aged between 70 and 20. These women gathered out of curiosity of the process but many also wanted to tell their stories and get closure on their terrible wartime experiences. What we found was that the methodology that had been used with the facilitators to prepare them for the work, was easy to replicate with the community women and they took them through the breathing, active listening and centering that we had done in the small group work prior to coming out. I travelled with the groups to each location and coached them through the process with three debriefing sessions a day and constant reviews and changes to the process to accommodate the contexts we were finding ourselves in. For example, many of the women came with little children so we hired a child minder in the middle of the process. We realized that we needed a dedicated logistics person and brought one in after the second dialogue. We changed the guides to accommodate the pace that suited the women since they seemed to want to tell their stories first and get out the experience of the war before they could engage with the concept of transitional justice and what that meant to them. After they had been taken through three days of dialogues, the women spontaneously started making personal and group commitments to peace activism in their community settings which will be followed up by the facilitation group.

The dialogue process was followed by an advocacy meeting where the learnings, information and the recommendations made by the women were presented to them in a large meeting in Monrovia with international and government representatives present. The women were then asked to participate in a process to validate the presentation and to agree that what had been presented was indeed what they had said. This meeting involved the entire 15 member group with each person presenting a part. Again, this participatory way was very well received and commended by the participants and the representatives as demonstrating the involvement and ownership of the process. The facilitation group then held another meeting with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission to hand over the recommendations. Since I as the gender advisor to the TRC was tasked with writing the chapter on gender and women for the TRC final report, I was able to ensure that these recommendations were captured in the final report that was released in July, 2009.

Learnings – the significance of self-reflection and self-knowledge

For women to engage with peace activism in the transitional justice process effectively after the need for confrontation was over, it was more beneficial to have a person with them all the way in a coaching role rather than a training or leadership role. It required patient and participatory work along with a deep understanding of the blocks and obstacles that come from each person's own experiences in life and during the war. Through working in this way, they were able to see how important self knowledge was and how it worked to either restrict or enable them to facilitate others. They also appreciated learning new tools on how to unblock themselves in order to be more effective in their work. They learnt planning, research and documentation skills as well but most importantly, they learnt the value of relationship building and participation when working with communities in order for transformation and mobilization to happen at that level.

Of course, in the time that we had, it was not possible to deepen this process to embed this new way of working and training workshops have been planned for later this year. The idea is to work with the same group so that they can transfer the skills and tools to the women in the communities.

Capacity building

In the debriefing and review sessions that we held throughout the project, we tried to unpack and understand the key success factors. The method of capacity building and understanding capacity building as going beyond technical training emerged as a strong theme. It required that we worked on a deep level of personal growth: on mediating internal and external conflicts and on transferring technical skills from a personal growth perspective by investigating the inner obstacles and clearing them out while embedding the hard skills. This way was found to be very useful and empowering. Walking alongside rather than leading or pushing from behind was also highly appreciated as a much more empowering way of working together. In brief, capacity building was seen as a process of relationship building and skills transfer as part of a long term engagement rather than a once off event. It highlighted the need to bridge the gap between theory and practice.

The combined work of both thought and action where each informs and even reforms the other is Praxis. What we did in Liberia was a constant

dialogical exercise which pushed the boundaries of conventional forms of theory on the one hand and tired models of practice on the other. Greek philosophy anchored praxis within the question "How do we live a good life?". Thus praxis in the gender context is a place where women work and live everyday. In terms of Praxis Intervention, we went further and unsettled our minds and practices by questioning our previous assumptions, judgments, expectations and decisions. In other words, we helped the mind at every instance of discomfort to uncover the underlying limiting beliefs and assumptions and to use the tools to let them go. Some of the women said that they had never looked within in this way nor seen clearly how what is within impacts on how one is being with what is happening externally. It is here, in that place, where the women brought together a stress on the interconnectedness of historical existence and normative concerns of freedom that the responsibility to change oppressive conditions into possibilities for human and planetary flourishing became real. We thus challenged ourselves to being with our own lives, our social political and economic contexts. We named our experiences, identified our own sufferings and articulated the concrete possibilities of transformation. We created knowledge that is self-reflexive and aimed at emancipation and enlightenment. We built a stronger theoretical base for direct practical engagement in peace building. We discovered that this kind of work requires space, and the freedom and security to speak, think, question, explore, give and receive. We sought to create an intellectual environment where we could all think critically and where we each offered new insights, new understandings. We realized that we must create that space together, respectfully and radically.

References

Barry, J. 2005. *Rising in Response: Women's Rights Activism in Conflict.* Colorado and Nairobi, Urgent Action Fund, *http://www.preventgbvafrica.org/content/rising-response-womens-rights-activism-conflict*; accessed 14 March, 2010.

Giri, A.K. 2002. *Conversations and Transformations : Towards a New Ethic of Self,.* Lanham, MD: Lexington Books

Meintjes,S., Pillay, A., & Turshen, M. 2001. *The Aftermath: Women in Post Conflict Transformation.* London: Zed Books

Mau, B. and the Institute Without Boundaries. 2004. *Massive Change.* London: Phaidon Press

Shelver, C. 2005. in Pillay, A. 2006. *Violence against Women In South Africa.* Centre for Applied Legal Studies, Wits University, South Africa presented at Putting Feminism on the Table Conference November 2006.

Vetten, L. 2005. *Violence against women: Good practices in combating and eliminating violence against women*, UNDAW, New York, http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/egm/vaw-gp-2005/docs/experts/vetten.vaw.pdf accessed 14 March, 2010.

Endnotes

1. Women in Law and Development at that time headed by feminist/activists Florence Butegwa and Everjoice Win.

2. A neutral way to bring the women of different faiths together initially.

3. "Untouchable" people outside the caste system in India.

4. Conflicted tribes of Northern India.

Standpoint:
"Murderous women"? Rethinking gender and theories of violence

Adelene Africa, University of Cape Town

'Murderous women' such as Dina Rodriguez who, in 2005, contracted two men to kill her ex-boyfriend's baby have been sensationalised in the South African media. Similarly, in 2006, also in South Africa, Najwa Petersen was convicted of the murder of her musician husband Taliep Petersen while in 2007 Ellen Pakkies received a non-custodial sentence for murdering her methamphetamine ('tik') addicted son. These women have gripped public attention because their acts were judged within courts of law as "calculated" and "intentional" and therefore contrary to popular conceptions of women who kill as either part of an anti-social political anarchism, or as those who kill violent partners, after years of abuse, in self-defence.

However, the image of the woman who kills for financial gain or who intentionally kills a child, challenges (and indeed violates) societal conceptions of stereotypical femininity, constructed as nurturing, vulnerable to abuse herself, and peace-loving. The issue of women's violence makes us uncomfortable as it challenges the normative social fabric and causes us to confront our beliefs about polarised gendered norms.

In the last two decades women's violence has increasingly received empirical attention by researchers in the Northern hemisphere because of the proliferation in arrest statistics for women in countries such as the United States of America (Melton & Belknap, 2003; West, 2007). Consequently, a range of studies have been conducted in an attempt to understand the phenomenon of women's violence in various spheres (Swan & Snow, 2003; Miller & Meloy 2006; Spinelli, 2001). Despite the growing numbers of women soldiers and women participants in "violent unrest" (such as Rwanda's 1994 genocide) in different contexts, there have been limited attempts to explore women's violence on the African continent (Adinkrah, 2007; Tibatemwa-Ekirikububinza, 1999; Pretorius and Botha, 2009). In South Africa in particular there is a dearth of empirical research.

Given the high rates of gender-based and other forms of violence, it is understandable that substantial local research has focused on violence perpetrated by men (Boonzaier and de la Rey, 2004; Jewkes & Abrahams, 2002). However, given that currently 1020 women are incarcerated for violent crimes and 337 are awaiting trial in South African correctional facilities, we cannot ignore the reality of women's violence (downloaded from http://www.dcs.gov.za/webstats , 20 August 2010). While it may be argued that women's low levels of violent perpetration do not warrant feminist attention, I think that failure to explore this simply reinforce stereotypes about the meaning and shape of "gendered violence" and adds to the sensationalisation and demonisation of *violent women* in media and popular discourse. As a feminist researcher I am interested in the ways in which notions of "violent women" have been constructed and how this leads to the perpetuation of unhelpful discourses on femininity and violence.

Discourses of women's violence

In my own review of the international literature I have identified three main discourses which underpin the mainstream empirical work in the last ten years. I will briefly discuss how the literature has constructed violent women as pathological (mad), victimised (sad) or deviant (bad) so as to highlight how they embody particular ideas of femininity.

Mad women

The image of the mentally disordered woman who kills is one of the predominant constructions in the literature and draws on a discourse of madness which has historically been utilised to explain and censure women's aberrant behaviour (Busfield, 1996; Chesler, 1997; Comack & Brickey, 2007; Lerman, 2005; Ussher, 2005). In attempting to establish the aetiology of women's lethal violence, the psychological and psychiatric literature has framed these acts within a psychopathological discourse. The focus on inherent biological or psychological dysfunction is seen to provide tangible evidence for 'uncharacteristic' violence – thus violence is medicalised and is viewed as the outcome of this dysfunction. Consequently a range of studies have been conducted so as to establish both the incidence and nature of various mental disorders present in women who are incarcerated for murder. In particular, these studies have focused on establishing the role that aberrant personality characteristics play in accounting for women's murderous acts

such that particular *types* of women can be identified (Putkonen, Collander, Honkasalo & Lönnqvist, 2001; Rossegger, Wetli, Urbaniok, Elbert, Cortoni & Endrass; 2009; Verona and Carbonell; 2000; Weizmann-Henelius, Viemerö & Eronen, 2003). It is significant that in profiling the type of woman who kills, the literature often concludes that masculine traits can be identified. The construction of the masculinised woman provides a plausible explanation for her acts – in this way the masculine-feminine binary is maintained and violence and aggression remain within the masculine realm. In addition, diagnostic labels also provide support for the notion of women's psychological fragility thereby reinforcing the binary.

While the construction of the personality disordered woman has provided plausible explanations for the killing of strangers and intimate partners, child killing represents the breaking of one of the central societal taboos. It is significant therefore that empirical work has focused on reinforcing the idea that women who kill their children often suffer from serious mental disorders. Consequently, psychotic disorders have formed the basis for most of these investigations thereby reinforcing notions that a gross impairment of psychological functioning can explain these acts. Thus *filicidal mothers* are not culpable as their acts are constructed as unintentional thereby maintaining the idealisation of motherhood. This "psychiatrisation" (pathologisation) of women's violence (Maden, 1997, p.245) denies women's agency and reinforces the gender stereotype of *filicidal mothers* as *mad*. In a similar vein Ussher (1991) implores

> "a diagnosis of madness denotes an absence of reason, this implies that women who commit crimes, who are violent, are not in control of their senses. Is this because criminality, violence or aggression cannot be reconciled with our conceptualisation of femininity, and thus the woman *must* be mad?" (p.172)

Victimised women

A significant proportion of the literature has focused on how women's victimisation by their partners has been shown to be the primary aetiological factor in their perpetration of lethal and non-lethal violence. In the 1980s the construction of the *"victimised woman"* drew attention to women's experiences in violent intimate relationships thereby highlighting intimate partner violence as a major social problem (Comack & Brickey, 2007). While on one hand these early feminist attempts were laudable, this construction

has entrenched stereotypical notions of women as helpless, weak and passive. Walker (1984, 2009), for example, showed how repeated exposure to violence combined with periods of caring and affection, left women feeling unable to exercise any agency in their lives. This "learned helplessness" (Walker, 1984, 2009) therefore explained why *battered women* were unable to leave their abusers. While the *battered woman* construct has been criticised for rendering women impotent and devoid of agency (Ferraro, 2003), the image of the victimised women continues to pervade our understanding of women's perpetration in violent relationships.

Since the 1990's increasing empirical attention has focused on quantitatively assessing bi-directional violence albeit to provide support for "gender symmetry" in levels of non-lethal perpetration (Archer, 2004; Brush, 1990; Straus & Gelles, 1986; Straus, 2005). However, this body of research has been criticised for equating the nature, frequency and severity of men and women's violence (Loseke and Kurz, 2005). Consequently, by focusing on the duality of the victim-perpetrator identity, researchers such as Dasgupta (2002) and Swan and Snow (2003, 2006) have argued that women's acts of resistance mostly occur in response to victimisation by partners or to protect their children. Thus violence is construed as serving a protective function and is therefore located within the legal discourse of self-defence (Dasgupta, 2002; Johnson & Ferraro, 2000; Muftic, Bouffard & Bouffard, 2007). While it is significant that several studies have established that some women perpetrate violence in the absence of provocation by their partners (Byrd & Davis, 2009; Swan & Snow, 2003), researchers have been loath to explore the meanings of these acts outside of the discourse of victimisation. Thus terms such as "abused aggressor" (Swan & Snow, 2003) have been coined to describe women who initiate violence – this has been done under the pretext of acknowledging the deleterious effects of battering on women's psychological functioning. This example illustrates that the *battered woman* discourse continues to permeate mainstream understandings of women perpetrators thereby perpetuating notions of women as devoid of agency. I would argue that such constructions are extremely limiting as they entrench stereotypical ideas of femininity and constrain our understanding of violence.

As discussed above, the *battered woman* discourse has been heavily critiqued by feminists and non-feminists. However, Rothenberg (2002) argues that it still maintains "cultural authority" in that it provides a plausible framework within which to understand the actions of *victimised women*.

This is probably most apparent in instances where women kill their abusive intimate partners - these acts are contextualised in terms of a very real threat (Walker, 1992, 2006; Ferraro, 2003). While a woman's right to defend herself is not at issue here, it is significant that she continues to be constructed as a victim of men's violence. This denies agency and assumes that her violent response is somehow beyond her control. This loss of control is not consistent with stereotypical femininity and is viewed as being indicative of her inability to exercise restraint (Campbell, 1993). This inability can be linked to the effects of victimisation thereby removing culpability. It can therefore be seen that the construction of the *battered woman* draws on the discourses of victimisation and psychopathology in that it describes a woman who is psychologically impaired because of her experiences of victimisation. Consequently, this construction can be offered as a plausible defence in criminal trials - however, in doing so, society's "rigid cultural gender polarity" (Gilbert, 2002: 1282) is maintained as the subtext is that *normal* women do not perpetrate violence. While I am arguing for an acknowledgement of agency in our conceptualisations of violence, I do realise that the legal implications are severe. While I have not resolved this double bind, I do feel that as a feminist who challenges the victim status accorded to *abused women*, I am even more uncomfortable with the ways in which psychiatric discourse is often expediently adopted to explain women's violent actions.

Deviant women

While *victim* and *mad* discourses focus on intra-individual deficits, the discourse of deviance focuses on the impact of the environment on women's levels of perpetration. Structural factors such as race, class and regional location are held to interact so as to provide a context which predisposes women to violence. While mainstream criminological theorising has been criticised for marginalising women (Chesney-Lind & Pasko, 2004; Smart, 1995), empirical work has focused on establishing whether the criminogenic factors which account for men's violence can also be applied to women. The investigation of homicide statistics in various jurisdictions has formed the basis of these quantitative studies and researchers have focused on establishing the structural correlates of violence (DeWees & Parker, 2003; Schwartz, 2006; Steffensmeier & Haynie, 2000). Large scale aggregate studies have therefore succeeded in profiling violent women so as to highlight *those sectors* of society which may be at risk. While to some extent these studies

point to the ways in which women are marginalised in society, they do not critically examine women's gendered experiences. In addition, by focusing on women's positionality as a causal mechanism in their violence, these studies run the risk of stigmatising marginalised women such that violence becomes synonymous with being poor, unemployed and Black. Therefore as several American studies have illustrated (Gauthier & Bankston, 2004; Scott & Davies, 2002; Pollock, Mullings & Crouch, 2006), the discourse of deviance is one which plausibly accounts for Black women's violence. These macro-level analyses serve to entrench societal beliefs about the positive correlation between race and violence without questioning the social forces which construct people in particular ways. In addition the aggregate data which underpin these studies ignore the subjective experiences of women and construct them as being products of their environments. Consequently the notion of agency is ignored.

A motivation for a feminist analysis of women's violence

While each discourse outlined above constructs particular conceptions of the aetiology of violence, the common thread which runs through all of this work is that violence is inconsistent with femininity. In this way the feminine-masculine dichotomy is maintained and violence remains framed within a masculine discourse. In addition, the categorisation of violence within these frameworks contributes to the silences around women's experiences as perpetrators thereby continuing to construct these acts as devoid of agency.

Given the shortcomings of the mainstream endeavours outlined above we are faced with the question as to the utility of a feminist analysis of women's violence. Kelly argues that it is imperative that we engage in empirical work in this area as we need to challenge the impetus of non-feminist endeavours in entrenching stereotypical notions of femininity and violence. She argues that a feminist framework which starts from the premise that gender is a "social construct" and "which recognises the variability with which gendered selves and individual biography combine, *can (my emphasis)* locate women's violence within its existing framework" (Kelly, 1996: 37). Thus a systematic analysis of women's violence is not antithetical to the feminist project. In fact, as has been argued, it will add to feminist endeavours focused on challenging and dislocating dominant discourses which stereotype women and men's behaviour and which emphasise the differences between them (Day, Gough & Macfadden, 2003; Gilbert, 2002). In addition a feminist analysis is pivotal

in challenging prevailing notions which construct women as passive and non-violent and which reinforce images of women as pathological victims who have no agency. Gilbert therefore argues for a "multilayered discourse of women and violence that will allow women to present and speak for themselves in such a way as to portray the complexities and realities of their lives" (Gilbert, 2002: 1296).

In the last decade Northern hemisphere feminists have qualitatively explored women's violence in a variety of ways. Some studies have focused on exploring the subjective meanings which women attach to their perpetration of lethal and/or non-lethal violence. These studies have sought to elicit the discourses implicit in women's narratives so as to ascertain how these contribute to the construction of femininities in various contexts (Comack & Brickey; Day, Gough & McFadden, 2003; Pollack, 2007; Wesely 2006). Other studies have utilised textual analyses to explore the ways in which the media constructs *violent women*. These studies have found that textual representations of women have largely drawn on traditional discourses of aberrant femininities thereby reinforcing images of women as mad, bad or victimised (Morrissey, 2008; Ringrose, 2006). Given the ways in which this body of work has sought to destabilise existing discourses of femininity and violence, I therefore argue for a feminist analysis of women's violence within a South African context. In doing so I also argue that a focus on violence can contribute to our understandings of the construction of femininities within our context.

South African women's narratives of violence

My positionality as black woman, a mother, a wife, a daughter, a sister, a feminist academic and a clinical psychologist (amongst others) has contributed to my interest in exploring women's violence. As a daughter, I lost my father to violence and as black South African woman I am concerned about the ways in which blackness is often equated with criminality and violence – thus the seeds for my work were sown a long time ago and in many ways the research project provided me with the opportunity to put (some) of those questions to rest.

My doctoral research has focused on exploring the subjectivities of women who are currently incarcerated for violent crime in a local correctional facility. As such it adds to feminist analyses which are concerned with challenging mainstream discourses of femininity and violence and to my knowledge is one

of the first local attempts at exploring women's violent perpetration outside of the domestic sphere.

The research questions which underpinned my study were as follows:

1.   What meanings do women attach to their act(s) of violence?
2.   How do women's narratives of violence oppose or take up socially constructed gendered norms?
3.   What identities do women construct in their narratives of violence?

Since I am interested in the construction of subjectivities, I used a narrative framework for my study. Narrative as both theory and method provides a means of exploring the construction of identity within the context of the life story (Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach and Zilber, 1998). In fact, as McAdams argues, "identity is a life story" and involves many "evolving narratives of the self". These narratives are organised around plots and themes which in turn function to tell a story about the self. The purpose of the life story is to provide an "integrative narrative of self that provides modern life with some modicum of psychosocial unity and purpose". (McAdams, 2001: 100). Within this framework, I conducted open-ended narrative interviews with 24 women who were serving sentences ranging from eight years to life imprisonment for crimes ranging from armed robbery to murder.

Since I was interested in exploring the identities which women constructed in their life stories, I paid attention to both the form and content of their narratives. Narrative form refers to the way in which a story is structured such that it conveys a particular story about the self. Narrative content refers to the actual substance of stories which pertain to the 'facts' of the individual's life as s/he constructs it (Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach and Zilber, 1998). Form and content are intricately intertwined such that the content which an individual uses to tell a story shapes it so as to tell a story about the self. While each life story is different, McAdams (2001) argues that it is also reflects the individual's positionality – thus structural forces such as race, class, gender and the discourses which underpin them, influence both the form and content of narratives.

In reading through the stories which the women shared with me, I identified three narrative forms which they used to convey stories about the self.

Conversion narratives

Some women told stories in which the protagonist was transformed from the bad woman into the good woman. The central theme of these conversion

narratives was one of redemption (Esterberg, 2002) in which criminal convictions were necessary elements for transformation. These narratives started off by providing micronarratives of badness – thus women told stories about their violent and aggressive behaviour towards other people. Since violence was constructed as a normal response in conflictual situations this provided a foundation for understanding why they had committed their crimes. In this way, a plausible trajectory was set up as their violent acts were inevitable outcomes of bad behaviour.

While inherent badness was a core theme in the macronarrative, women also referred to external influences which could account for their actions. Thus associating with bad friends and abusing alcohol were constructed as influencing them in a negative manner. While on one hand, this exacerbated their badness, the focus on external influences also provided some mitigation – thus some of the blame could be borne by their friends and alcohol and they (the women) were not solely culpable. The focus on the self pre-incarceration served the purpose of providing a contrast to the self post-incarceration. In order to negate the identities of bad girl, murderer, criminal which had been ascribed, women constructed identities of goodness by recounting how incarceration had saved them from themselves. Thus they told stories about becoming good women in prison and how this had led them to resolving to desist from violence. Thus incarceration was central to this transformation and they welcomed it as it had been celestially ordained. Conversion narratives therefore enabled women to make sense of their violence (and their lives) by attributing it to predestination – in this way they were able to coherently integrate various aspects of their life experiences in a meaningful way.

Stability narratives

In this group of narratives women constructed their violence as temporary aberrations of their behaviour. In essence the violence was constructed as out of character with the individual's "normal" behaviour and the central theme of these stories was the constancy of the protagonist's moral fibre over time (Presser, 2004). Thus protagonists in stability narratives were essentially good women who identified very closely with stereotypical femininity. These stories focused on their roles as wives and mothers and the ways in which they were completely devoted to their families. In addition, their narratives also highlighted their experiences of victimisation both in childhood and adulthood thereby drawing attention away from their identities as perpetrators. The

construction of victimhood as central to their identities as women reinforced their impotent, passive natures which in turn emphasised their femininity. Images of respectability also permeated their stories particularly in relation to their crimes – in these micronarratives the protagonists tried to avoid extreme provocation by their victims or sought to do the "right thing" by notifying the police of the crimes. In this way, the high moral character of the protagonists could not be questioned. Interestingly, these narrators did not attach much significance to incarceration in relation to their stories of the self – instead, they focused on the unjustness of their sentences and emphasised the differences between themselves (as good women) and other inmates who deserved to be incarcerated. In this way they consolidated their narratives of "the good woman" who was unjustly punished.

Incoherent narratives

As discussed previously, identity is constructed through the life story and provides the individual with means of telling a story about the self. In the narrative forms discussed above, the narrators were able to construct coherent accounts by organising micronarratives around central themes thereby providing plausible accounts of violent acts as well as the self. However, the majority of the women whom I interviewed provided incoherent narratives (McAdams, 2006) in which they were unable to link life experiences in meaningful ways such that plausible causal trajectories were set up (Habermas and Bluck, 2000). The ways in which these narratives were structured suggested that these women were unable to integrate their experiences into a meaningful whole which led to these being unable to make "psychological sense" (McAdams, 2006: 114). Since the lack of thematic coherence (Habermas and Bluck, 2000) was evident in these narratives, I focused on the ways in which the form and content of the stories contributed to its incoherence. These narrators were unable to successfully locate the violent acts within the explanatory context of the life story in spite of various attempts to do so. Some narrators attempted to make causal connections between their life experiences but were unable to sustain these connections – consequently, the plot lines were thin and the causal trajectories were not convincing. Other narrators provided accounts of their crimes but did not adopt an interpretive stance so as to indicate the meaning which they had attributed to their acts. A third sub-group of narrators defocused from their crimes by focusing on other aspects of their lives which suggested that they were unable to integrate

the violence into their macronarratives of the self. While the ways in which crime narratives were conveyed differed amongst this group of narrators, the strategies which they adopted illustrated their inability to successfully integrate their life experiences into a meaningful whole.

Conclusion

From the above it can be seen that the monolithic *violent woman* does not exist; instead women construct various identities in narrating stories of violence. This was pertinently illustrated in those instances where coherent macronarratives could not be constructed - these narratives illustrated the fluidity of the construction of identity or identities, a process which these narrators, in particular, seemed to be grappling with.

In exploring the construction of subjectivities within narratives, my work moves away from mainstream thinking around violent women. Instead it provides a way of understanding how violent women construct themselves and illustrates the ways in which prevailing discourses of femininity and violence influence these constructions.

References

Adinkrah, M. 2007. Women who kill their husbands: Mariticides in contemporary Ghana. *Aggressive Behavior, 33,* 526-536.

American Psychiatric Association. 2000. *Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders, (4th ed., Text Revision)*. Washington, DC: Author.

Archer, J. 2004. Sex differences in aggression in real-world settings: A meta-analytic review. *Review of General Psychology, 8,* 291-322.

Boonzaier, F. & de la Rey, C. 2004. Woman abuse: The construction of gender in women and men's narratives of violence. *South African Journal of Psychology, 34,* 443-463.

Brush, L. D. 1990. Violent acts and injurious outcomes in married couples: Methodological issues in the national survey of families and households. *Gender and Society*, *4*, 56- 67.

Busfield, J. 1996. *Men, women and madness. Understanding mental disorder*. London: Macmillan.

Byrd, P. & Davis, J. 2009. Violent behaviour in female inmates: Possible predictors.

Journal of Interpersonal Violence, 24, 379-392.

Campbell, A. 1993. *Men, women and aggression*. New York: Basic Books.

Chesler, P. 1997. *Women and madness*. New York: Four Walls Eight Windows.

Chesney-Lind, M. & Pasko, L. 2004. *The Female Offender: Girls, women and crime (2nd ed.).* California: Sage.

Comack, E. & Brickey, S. 2007. Constituting the violence of Criminalized Women. *Canadian Journal of Criminology and Criminal Justice, 49,* 1-36.

Dasgupta, S. D. 2002. A framework for understanding women's use of nonlethal violence in intimate heterosexual relationships. *Violence Against Women, 8,* 1364-1389.

Day, K., Gough, B., & McFadden, M. 2003. Women who drink and fight: A discourse analysis of working class women's talk. *Feminism and psychology, 13,* 141-158.

Dewees, M. & Parker, K. 2003. Women, region and types of homicide. *Homicide Studies, 7,* 368-393.

Esterberg, K. 2000. *Qualitative methods in social research.* Boston: McGraw Hill.

Ferraro, K. 2003. The words change, but the melody lingers: The persistence of the Battered Woman Syndrome in criminal cases involving battered women. *Violence Against Women, 9,* 110-129.

Gauthier, D. K. & Bankston, W. B. 2004. "Who kills whom" revisited: A sociological study of variation in the sex ratio of spouse killings. *Homicide Studies, 8,* 96-122.

Gilbert, P. 2002. Discourses of female violence and societal gender stereotypes. *Violence Against Women, 8,* 1271-1300.

Habermas, T. & Bluck, S. 2000. Getting a life: The emergence of the life story in adolescence. *Psychological Bulletin, 126,* 748-769.

Jewkes, R. & Abrahams, N. 2002. The epidemiology of rape and sexual coercion in South Africa: An overview. *Social Science and Medicine, 55,* 1231-1244.

Johnson, M. P. & Ferraro, K. J. 2000. Research on domestic violence in the 1990s: Making distinctions. *Journal of Marriage and Family, 62*, 948-963.

Kelly, L. 1996. When does the speaking profit?: reflections on the challenges of developing feminist perspectives on abuse and violence. In M. Hester, L. Kelly & J. Radford (Eds). *Women violence and male power.* Buckingham: Open University Press.

Lerman, H. 2005. Women's misery: continuing pigeonholes into the 21st century. In W. Chan, D. Chunn & R. Menzies (Eds.). *Women, madness and the Law: a feminist reader* (pp. 101-115). London: The Glass House Press.

Lieblich, A., Tuval-Mashiach, R., & Zilber, T. 1998. *Narrative research: Reading, analysis and interpretation.* California: Sage Publications.

Loseke, D. R. & Kurz, D. 2005. Men's violence toward women is the social problem. In D. R. Loseke, R. J. Gelles, & M. M. Cavanaugh (Eds.), *Current controversies on family violence (2nd ed.)* (pp. 79-96). California: Sage.

Maden, A. 1997. Are women different? *International Review of Psychiatry, 9*, 243-248.

McAdams, D. P. 2001. The psychology of life stories. *Review of General Psychology, 5,* 100-122.

McAdams, D. P. 2006. The problem of narrative coherence. *Journal of Constructivist Psychology, 19,* 109-125.

Melton, H. C. & Belknap, J. 2003. He hits, she hits: Assessing gender differences and similarities in officially reported intimate partner violence. *Criminal Justice and Behavior, 30,* 328-348.

Miller, S. L. & Meloy, M. L. 2006. Women's use of force: Voices of women arrested for domestic violence. *Violence Against Women, 12,* 89-115.

Morrissey, B. 2008. *When women kill: Questions of agency and subjectivity.* London: Routledge.

Muftic, L., Bouffard, J., & Bouffard, L. 2007. An exploratory study of women arrested for intimate partner violence: Violent women or violent resistance? *Journal of Interpersonal Violence, 22,* 753-774.

Pollock, J. M., Mullings, J. L., & Crouch, B. M. 2006. Violent women. Findings from the Texas women inmates study. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence, 21,* 485-502.

Pollack, S. 2007. "I'm just not good in relationships": Victimization discourses and the gendered regulation of criminalized women. *Feminist Criminology, 2,* 158-174.

Presser, L. 2004. Violent offenders, moral selves: Constructing identities and accounts in the research interview. *Social Problems, 51,* 82-101.

Presser, L. 2005. Negotiating power and narrative in research: Implications for feminist methodology. *Journal of Women in Culture and Society, 30,* 2067-2090.

Pretorius, G. & Botha, S. 2009. The cycle of violence and abuse in women who kill an intimate male partner: a biographical profile. *South African Journal of Psychology, 39,* 242-252.

Putkonen, H., Collander, J., Honkasalo, M., & Lonnqvist, J. 2001. Personality disorders and psychoses form two distinct subgroups of homicide amongst female offenders. *Journal of Forensic Psychiatry, 12,* 300-312.

Ringrose, J. 2006. A new universal mean girl: Examining the discursive construction and social regulation of a new feminine pathology. *Feminism and Psychology, 16,* 405-424.

Rossegger, A., Wetli , N., Urbaniok, ., Elbert, T., Cortoni., & Endrass, J. 2009. Women convicted for violent offenses: Adverse childhood experiences, low level of education and poor mental health. *Biomed Central Psychiatry, 9,* 81.

Rothenberg, B. 2002. The success of the Battered Woman Syndrome: An analysis of how cultural arguments succeed. *Sociological Forum, 17,* 81-103.

Schwartz, J. 2006. Family structure as a source of female and male homicide in the United States. *Homicide Studies, 10,* 253-278.

Scott, L. J. & Davies, K. 2002. Beyond the statistics: An examination of killing by women in three Georgia counties. *Homicide Studies, 6,* 297-324.

Spinelli, M. 2001. A systematic investigation of 16 cases of neonaticide. *American Journal of Psychiatry, 158,* 811-813.

Steffensmeier, D. & Haynie, D. L. 2000. The structural sources of urban female violence in the United States: A macrosocial gender-disaggregated analysis of adult and juvenile homicide offending rates. *Homicide Studies, 4,* 107-134.

Straus, M. A. 2005. Women's violence toward men is a serious social problem. In D. R. Loseke, R. J., Gelles, & M. M. Cavanaugh (Eds.), *Current controversies on family violence (2nd ed.)* (pp. 55-78). California: Sage.

Straus, M. A. & Gelles, R. J. 1986. Societal change and change in family violence from 1975 to 1985 as revealed by two national surveys. *Journal of Marriage and the Family, 48,* 3, 465-479.

Swan, S. C., & Snow, D. L. 2003. Behavioral and psychological differences among abused women who use violence in intimate relationships. *Violence Against Women, 9,* 75-109.

Tibatemwa-Ekirikubunza, L. 1999. *Women's violent crime in Uganda: More sinned against than sinning.* Kampala: Fountain Publishers.

Ussher, J. 1991. *Woman's madness: Misogyny or mental illness.* New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf.

Ussher, J. 2005. Unravelling women's madness: Beyond positivism and constructivism and towards a material-discursive-intrapsychic approach. In W. Chan, D. Chunn, & R. Menzies (Eds.). *Women, madness and the Law: a feminist reader. London: The Glass House Press.*

Verona, E. & Carbonell, J. 2000. Female Violence and Personality: Evidence for a Pattern of Overcontrolled Hostility among One-Time Violent Female offenders. *Criminal Justice and Behavior, 27,* 176.

Walker, L. 1984. *The Battered Woman Syndrome.* New York: Springer Publishing Company.

Walker, L. 2009. *The Battered Woman Syndrome (3rd ed.).* New York: Springer Publishing Company.

Weizmann-Henelius, G., Viemero, V., & Eronen, M. 2003. The violent female perpetrator and her victim. *Forensic Science International, 133,* 197-203.

Wesely, J. K. 2006. Considering the context of women's violence: Gender, lived experiences, and cumulative victimization. *Feminist Criminology, 1,* 303-328.

West, C. M. 2007. "Sorry, we have to take you in:" Black battered women arrested for intimate partner violence. *Journal of Aggression, Maltreatment and Trauma, 15,3/4* 95-121.

In Conversation:
Masculinities and Gender-Based Violence

Godwin Murunga, of the University of Kenyatta, talks about his research – African feminisms and ideas on masculinities and violence – with Jane Bennett

Jane Bennett: Godwin, thank you very much for having this conversation. In the past decade or so, a lot of work has been initiated in African contexts around the importance of taking masculinities seriously as part and parcel of activist and theoretical feminist work. So, may we jump straight in – what is the most interesting piece of work you've been doing lately?

Godwin Murunga: There are three main projects I am engaged with lately that touch very closely on masculinities. The first, a commissioned chapter on men and masculinities in Kenya, is an exploratory study of the state of research on men and their role in the struggles for gender equity in Kenya. When finished, the chapter will be reviewed for publication in a study to be edited by Elisabetta Ruspini, Jeff Hearn, Bob Pease and Keith Pringle titled *Globalizing Men: Transforming Men's Practices in the New Millennium* that is to be published by Routledge. The second, a study of gender and "insecurities" in Africa, is a proposed joint project with Patricia Daley of School of Geography and the Environment, University of Oxford. We are still conceptualising the idea of this project. The third, also still at proposal formulation level, is a study of young women and political leadership in Kenya. This is being jointly formulated with Grace Mbugua of Women's Empowerment Link (WEL) and Dr Regina Karega of the National Commission on Gender and Development of the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Development in Kenya. Though focusing on women, these two proposed projects have a masculinities component. Apart from these projects, I also convene the Gender Roundtable Series and publish the Gender Roundtable Bulletin at Kenyatta University with the support of the Regional Gender Programme of the Heinrich Böll Foundation (HBF). I started this Series in 2007 with the support of Wanjiku Wagoki of HBF and we convene periodically for dialogues, seminars and lectures on a theme of relevance to gender.

JB: All of those sound very interesting – the connection between masculinities and "insecurity" sounds especially provocative. Which one is the highlight for you, though, right now?

GM: The book chapter is perhaps the highlight of the three projects I have mentioned and let me briefly say more about it. Basically, this study begins with the argument that the emergence of active groups focusing their attention on men and masculinities in Kenya is very recent, dating perhaps only a decade ago. Their intervention in addressing challenges facing men and in changing attitudes towards women was therefore preceded and will most likely be framed by prior feminist struggles for gender equity. Since feminist struggles preceded men's involvement in the struggles for equity, the chapter seeks to understand how the "men" and "masculinities" question has been framed by the feminist movements in Kenya and how this framing has impacted emerging groups and organizations whose objective is to address the men and masculinities question. At the core of the chapter is the attempt to reflect on why gender issues are predominantly treated as women's issues and to initiate a re-reading of the male category in Kenya as a gendered category. Ultimately, the chapter makes the central argument that any investigation of changing masculinities can and should, conceptually and practically, contribute to promoting women's rights and altering gender relations in society. In other words, I argue in this chapter that the project of "engendering" men does not, as is commonly assumed in sections of the feminist movement in Kenya, necessarily contradict the struggles for gender equity.

JB: Godwin, it's still quite unusual to find men in our academic contexts so engaged with theorizing gender in Africa. What was your own trajectory into masculinity studies?

GM: My trajectory into masculinity studies has been shaped by three moments. The first was a review essay titled "African Women in the Academy and Beyond" that I published in *Jenda: A Journal of Culture and African Women Studies*, 2, 1, 2000. This was my first attempt to write on a gender theme. When I submitted the essay, I frankly was not sure it could pass the review process. At the time, I was a graduate student in the US. One reason I wrote the review was to engage myself more fruitfully away from a unit on historical linguistics that I was doing at the time. I did not find the unit interesting and I decided instead to write the review as a way of engaging myself. The essay provoked several conversations with Nkiru Nzegwu and Oyeronke Oyewumi, two scholars whose ideas have shaped a number of my

thoughts about gender because of the way they sociologically locate the notion in the African context.

After publishing the review essay online, Oyewumi requested to have it published as part of the *African Gender Studies: A Reader* that she edited. Subsequent to this publication, and this is the second moment, I was invited to attend the annual CODESRIA Gender Symposium in Cairo in 2007. Prior to this, I had been avidly reading around gender issues. The more I read, the more I got convinced that not only was this a valid and transformative area of study, but that more and more men needed to engage the field. Listening to or reading key contributors to the discussion in Africa, I was convinced that gender could not be treated as that area of research that one goes to as an afterthought and neither could it be pigeonholed into that "research thing" that scholars write on after they have already done all the other "important"stuff. It was clear to me reading Sylvia Tamale, Amina Mama or Zenebeworke Tadesse that gender was an integral aspect of our everyday lives. Indeed, everyday engagements are structured around or influenced by gender and its social construction.

Yet, and this was the third moment, there was the nagging question of what role men can play in the gendered struggles for equity and why they receive very little mention in mainstream gender studies. My own reflections on this led me to two general initiatives. The first involved avidly reading what African feminists say about the place of men in gender struggles and the second was a workshop I organized on behalf of Ford Foundation Regional Office in Nairobi in May 2008.

In starting my reading, I could not think of a stronger advocate for women empowerment than the Nigerian feminist and academic, Obioma Nnaemeka. In the article titled "Nego Feminism: Theorizing, Practicing, and Pruning Africa's Way" published in *Signs*, Volume 29, Issue 2, 2004, she refers to the African feminist struggles for equity as nego-feminism and defines it as "a feminism of negotiation" or as "no-ego feminism." To her, this is a feminism that foregrounds "negotiation, give and take, compromise and balance." She argues that African Feminism "challenges through negotiation and compromise." In explaining the negotiation, Nnaemeka cites Filomena Chioma Steady to point to a very important feature of the cultural universe in which African feminists operate: the fact that their context makes it necessary that they

"view human life from a total, rather dichotomous and exclusive, perspective. For women, the male is not the other, but part of the human

same. Each gender constitutes the critical half that makes the human whole. Neither sex is totally complete in itself. Each has and needs a complement, despite the possession of unique features of its own."

Nnaemeka concludes with the statement: "African women's willingness and readiness to negotiate with and around men even in difficult circumstances is quite pervasive."

This is a powerful conceptual argument that brings men back into the discussion of gender. One only finds such argument in scattered dots that are yet to be connected into a single coherent account of what role men ought to play in the struggles for gender equity. It is Willy Mutunga and Tade Akin Aina who gave me the opportunity to think through these issues. First, they supported me for a one month reading and reflections stay in the US where I had the chance to use the Northwestern University Library in October 2007. Then in May 2008, they asked me to co-ordinate a Convening on The Well-Being of Black Men and Masculinities in the United States and Africa. This convening was meant to be the beginning of a conversation among African colleagues and between them and colleagues in the US. This convening helped me shape my own thoughts about men and masculinities and how these relate to struggles for gender equity.

JB: So how would you put this all in a nutshell, if you were faced with a sceptical audience?

GM: I would like to offer these thoughts in very broad strokes.

First, the struggle against sexism and for gender equity was pioneered by women. Indeed, black/African women pioneered the struggle against multiple forms of marginalisation. Thus, women know what they want and how to achieve it. As such, the entry of men into the struggle is welcome but we must guard against the possibility of them (men) subverting the struggle by seeking to take leadership and dominate this struggle. In other words, the role of men in the struggle for gender equity must be subordinated to the leadership and agenda of African women. Second, we advance this struggle every time we chip something away from the dominant patriarchal system. We do that, first by studying and understanding patriarchy and secondly (to borrow from Sylvia Tamale's fine formulation published in the *Gender Roundtable Bulletin*) by convincing men to "unlearn their internalised superiority and discuss new ways of being men." Furthermore, the struggle for gender equity constantly faces the challenge of entryism. We need to confront this by also insisting that women avoid the pitfalls of being masculinised. In other words, the more

men we can convince to join the struggle for gender justice, the better since this will constitute a gain for the struggle.

Here, an analogy from the civil rights movement will do. Every one of those great civil rights leaders acknowledges how important it was to have white allies in their struggle. While some may have become "allies" so as to spy on the civil rights movement, there is no doubt that the more white people got convinced of the gains of civil rights, the easier it became to launch deeper into the struggle. In other words, feminists need more male allies. They cannot get these allies if they do not engage masculinities and get men to unlearn their internalised superiority. As Sylvia Tamale summarised it at the Ford Foundation convening, the study of men and masculinities is only useful if it helps advance the struggle for equity and gender justice.

JB. Thanks, Godwin. Now, you've said something about this already but in your own thinking, what are the most important debates in African-based masculinities studies?

GM: There are very many debates around masculinities that are going on. But the one basic debate that has been overridden by the "sophisticated" dominant theories and studies is what the role of men in gender and feminist studies ought to be? Second, there are vibrant debates around gay identities and lesbianism that impact on masculinities studies in Africa. Finally, there are interesting discussion around the issue of masculinities, conflicts and gender-based violence.

The first debate is barely given due attention in most African feminist spaces, and as a consequence, a number of feminists have been unable to get over the conceptual difficulty of having men as allies in the struggle. As I have suggested above, once we subordinate masculinities studies in Africa to the historical struggles and gains of feminists and ensure that the agenda remains firmly with women, then the conceptual difficulty become less intense. But, at least in East Africa, this debate has also touched on allocation of resources for research and activism in gender studies. Some women and feminist organizations have warned against support to men's organizations that do gender sensitisation. They argue that this diverts resources and monies that would or should otherwise be allocated to women's organisations. For them, this perpetuates the historic male dominance. This debate can benefit from a conceptual clarification of what place and role African-based masculinities can play in advancing the struggle and ensuring commitment to gender equality.

The debate around gay identities and lesbianism is also a debate on exclusion and discrimination. It poses a challenge that impacts men in myriad ways. When not properly framed, debates on exclusion and discrimination often locate men, homogenously, as a privileged group. The debate on gay and lesbianism offer interesting corrections to this generalisation. In many African countries, the debate suffers two main problems. One, it unnecessarily pegs the discussion on western terms without being thoughtfully comparative and two, it uncritically Mugabe-izes the discussion. The reality ultimately is that there is no amount of dictatorship that will eliminate from our midst people whose sexual orientation differs from heterosexuals.

Second, there are important sociological questions to be dealt with respect to the presence in our midst of gays and lesbians. We can hold onto the idea of a "pristine Africa" free of such "deviants," but that does not deal with the historical and sociological fact that that "pristine Africa" is fast disappearing before our own eyes. Men and women, gays and lesbians, young and old, black or white, etcetera, are all facing serious challenges in making it to the next day; they are experiencing rising levels of poverty, unemployment, exploitation, exclusion and discriminations of one form or another. In a sense, the targeting of gays and lesbians in our society has become a useful diversionary tool in a society experiencing grinding dictatorships and the result has been that if it gays and lesbians today, it will be someone else tomorrow. Those who sanction and legitimise exclusion today will live to experience it the next time.

The discussion about masculinities, conflicts and gender-based violence is perhaps the most enthralling. It is also scattered and quite often, there is no understanding of what role flawed masculinities play in conflicts. Furthermore, there is normalisation of men's suffering in war and conflicts. Every news item on conflict will regularly mention how women and children are suffering from war or conflict and how rape and sexual abuse have become weapons for wagging war. Often, these news items report facts of suffering among women and children and no one can fruitfully dispute the fact. However, in making these reports, these items also normalise the suffering of men and identify all men as perpetrators and all women as victims. One cannot dispute that most wars in Africa are disproportionately masculine or masculinised. But we are better off nuancing this discussion to effectively deal with the gender dynamics that inform the causes and execution of war. In other words, women do not simply appear at the end of a conflict, they are apart of the gendered

discussions and rituals that go into making, execution and ending of war. But how well do we really understand that dynamic?

The idea of flawed or hegemonic masculinity has been used to indicate that though all men enjoy the "patriarchal dividend" by the sheer fact of being men, these dividends do not accrue to all of them in the same manner and in equal measure. I wonder how much we can use this insight to develop a nuanced conceptual way of rethinking masculinities, conflicts and gender-based violence?

JB: I think this is a very useful insight on many levels. How do you respond to the challenge of ensuring that these debates actually help us engage political and economic challenges facing men and women, in different contexts?

GM: Let us take the case of the first debate above on the role of men and apply it to Kenya, for instance, around the Sexual Offenses Act of 2006. In my interaction with colleagues involved in the discussion, one had a sense that some gender activists treat this as a women's issue alone. What is worse is that most men also treat issues of gender-based violence and representation as women's issues. At the very best, a good number of them would say they are concerned about rape and leave it at the level of being concerned. In my view, this way of thinking about acts of violence and rape is misplaced and inadequate. What if we frame the argument differently and say that every man who has a sister, a daughter, a wife, a mother or a grandmother has a stake in operationalising and ensuring the efficacy of the Sexual Offenses Act or the effective representation of women in political parties, in the Political Parties Act of 2007.

This alters the dynamic completely. This is the way I think about the effective conceptualisation of the role of men in gender struggles. In getting more men to appreciate the value of an empowered woman, we effectively create a basis not only of changing attitudes but also of mobilising a wider constituency to address real political and economic challenges facing men and women. Wangari Maathai put it very well when she said:

> "I think we can talk about the position of women in Africa and see how miserable it is, quite often we forget that these miserable women are married to miserable men. They are oppressed together, and it is only a small group of elite middle-class Africans who can say that they have made it."[1]

JB: You hinted above at some possible tensions between some feminist thinking and new explorations on masculinities in African contexts. What is

your own relationship with feminist thinkers and activists like?

GM: I consider most feminist thinkers and activists mostly as mentors and teachers. Every time I read, listen to or dialogue with a good number of African feminists, I come away appreciating how much I do not yet know. Of course, not all of them fit into this categorisation as I have also met "feminists" whose thinking/practices undermine women's struggles.

I have already dropped a few names of feminist thinkers/activists whose work has influenced my thinking but that list is by no means exhaustive. I know some of these feminist thinkers or have engaged them in conversations through email or by telephone. There are many others whom I have never met but whose writings impute a level of familiarity. Overall, I would say that I read those feminist thinker/activists whose work I consider useful to my intellectual and personal growth or those whose commitments come through as inspiring. I am, for instance, referring to the work of Zen Tadesse (whom I first met in a very *acrimonious* context during the 2002 CODESRIA General Assembly in Kampala but who has become a mentor), Amina Mama (whose notion of femocracy represents for me an important conceptual breakthrough that we have not effectively utilised), Sylvia Tamale (whose work on sexuality retains a very solid sociological appreciation of the unique experiences of communities in Uganda), Takyiwaa Manuh, Obioma Nnaemeka, Ifi Amaduime (a pioneer with her work on *Male Daughters, Female Husbands*), 'Ronke Oyewumi (I found myself defending her work on the *Invention of Women* in a graduate class at Northwestern University from unfair attack), Marema Toure, Fatou Sow, Aminata Diaw (I cannot get enough of the works of these three since they write in French), Shahida El-Baz, Onnalena Selolwane, Pinkie Mekgwe (friends and colleagues I have worked with in CODESRIA and whose thinking illuminate some of my own ideas), Rudo Gaidzanwa, Florence Etta, N'Dri T. Assie-Lumumba, Joy Kwesiga and Josephine Ahikire (whose work on higher education brings important gender dimensions to the discussion) and Winnie Mitullah (whose versatility confounds). I cannot forget Jessie Kabwila Kapasula, a colleague from Malawi, whose activism and academic engagements gel naturally and whose forcefulness in defending Africa and women's rights is often mistaken for an anti-male bias. But Jessie will not shy away from stating it as she sees it.

There are of course non-African feminist writers/activists whose work has been inspiring and is a must read. Zillah Eisenstein and Chandra Talpate Mohanty come to mind. Mohanty's "Under Western Eyes" article

was superb. Not only has Zillah regularly sent me her latest essays but she also gave us permission to republish sections of her book in the *Gender Roundtable Bulletin*. Then there are male colleagues and authors whose work, contribution and friendship is a constant inspiration. They are, among others, Adebayo Olukoshi, Joe Oloka-Onyango, Paul Tiyambe Zeleza and, of course, the much younger colleague from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Jacques Tshibwabwa Kuditshini. By far, my greatest inspiration in Kenya has been Will Mutunga and Rev. Dr. Timothy Njoya. These are people who combine intellectual engagement and activism and manage often to deliver their messages with a combination of humility and candour.

With respect to feminist activist/thinkers, I confess to being a little too selective. This is perhaps unfair but I am more inclined towards those whose activism is informed by research. I find Atsango Chesoni, former Deputy Chairperson of the Committee of Experts for Constitution Review in Kenya quite engaging and was glad to host her for a Gender Roundtable Series Session early this year. The former Director of Akina Mama wa Afrika (London and Uganda), Zeedah Meierhofer-Mangeli, has been an inspiration in my thinking. She is humorously engaging and actually provoked me into a dialogue with Wandia Nyoya that appeared simultaneously at www.zeleza.com and www.pambazuka.org and in the Kenya Human Rights Commission Newsletters *Mizizi ya Haki*, Issue no. 9 July 2009. And I should add that I have always found Wandia Njoya's writings extremely engaging and beneficial, even though I seemed a little too dismissive of the particular piece I critiqued.

Of course, like every family, there are those with whom I enjoy only a passing relationship or that I have never really been able to gain their intellectual confidence and comradeship. There are others who have been dismissive of whatever contribution some of us can make to gender studies. I recall just after the *African Gender Studies* reader I refer to above was published, I was invited to a meeting in Cairo. When I proudly pulled out a copy I had carried along, a number of colleagues at the meeting were impressed and sought to find out how to acquire a copy. But two colleagues who asked to browse the copy simply looked at the names on the content page and dismissed it as a volume whose contributors live outside the continent. Such encounters have necessarily shaped how I engage other feminist colleagues.

JB: Hmmm, that raises a whole set of questions on its own. Last one, though, for now – in your own mind, what are the most powerful ways of challenging

the "inevitable" connections between masculinization and tolerance for violence?

GM: Perhaps, it is important first to emphasize that there is no natural or inevitable connection between masculinity and tolerance for violence. That connection is the product of socialisation, the inevitable consequence not simply of masculinisation but of flawed masculinity, to borrow Rev. Dr. Timothy Njoya's formulation. It is important to distinguish between forms of masculinity because if we generalise, we also condemn those forms of positive manhood in society that are obviously integral to our reality and wellbeing. This, of course takes me back to the reference to Nnaemeka above when she asserts that "the male is not the other, but part of the human same. Each gender constitutes the critical half that makes he human whole. Neither sex is totally complete in itself."

Tolerance for violence is the consequence of flawed socialisation. And the process of socialisation is indeed a lifelong one which begins from early on as a child. I think one powerful intervention must focus on the family to empower parents to teach male and female children about the dangers of flawed masculinity. This is the kind of masculinity that assumes men are superior, that they are owners of property, providers and protectors. This masculinity teaches men to internalise their superiority and women to internalise their inferiority. It allocates household chores according to sex and sanctions the domestication of women. In other words, flawed masculinity teaches young girls to become "things" and young men to become "people." Things are normally owned by people.

JB: Godwin, thanks for this conversation ... the way you're laying out your ideas is full of energy and conviction. I'm delighted we're going to be able to offer them space in *Feminist Africa* and hope this won't be the last time we connect.

Endnotes

1. Statement by Wangari Maathai cited in Tami Hultman, "I am Woman," in Africa News, 36, June 8-June 21, p. 3 or citied in April Gordon, "Gender, Ethnicity, and Class in Kenya: "Burying Otieno" Revisited," in *Signs*, vol. 20, no. 4, p. 883

In Conversation:
Stories of Survival

Yaliwe Clarke, African Gender Institute, talks to
Pauline Fransisca Dempers, Director and founder of
Breaking the Wall of Silence, an organization based in
Namibia which addresses the experiences of surviving
armed conflict in Namibia

Yaliwe Clarke: Ok let me start by first of all thanking you for this interview, again. We will spend some time talking about your life experiences. So let's start with an open question – when did you start doing this work?

Pauline Dempers: I started working on atrocities committed by the liberation movement South West Africa People's Organisation, (SWAPO), immediately after our release from the SWAPO dungeons way back in 1989, shortly when I came back to Namibia from exile. My work on human rights began in my student years... I got involved in student politics because I realised that we were oppressed by the white people. I must thank my dad and my mum who made me realise that we were oppressed, that we were different in colour and the white people were the ones that were oppressing us. While involved in student politics I started working around peace and human rights because I felt that we were not at peace as Namibians, as natives of the country.

YC: Yes...could you tell me a little bit more about your time in the liberation movement, how you got involved and what you did?

PD: Ya, I was a political activist in SWAPO and was involved in youth work and politics, and there was a time when political tensions reached a peak, I should say when most of the leaders were arrested. The youth became more vibrant, dealing with the politics of the day and you know that had also made the youth unpopular with the political leadership. But the political leadership could not give direction as most of them were arrested, some in house arrest or confinement. The few that were not affected failed to offer us leadership (perhaps out of fear of imprisonment) and could not lead the internal SWAPO wing as they should have done. When the youth started working on mobilising and motivating the masses, the internal national leadership received this with

mixed feelings and started accusing the youth of working for the enemy.

YC: Hmmm... and what did you yourself do as a young woman, what did you actually do when you were of the youth liberation movement

PD: You know we had this mobilisation work that we would do, and I would go from house to house explaining to people what the struggle is all about, why we should be united as black Namibians, why we had to oppose the current government, the South African Apartheid government, and so on. That was our approach to mobilizing.

YC: And then you faced some tension and pressure from the leaders within SWAPO, tell me about that.

PD: Yes, like I said, maybe they feared for their lives as the South African Apartheid regime was becoming more aggressive and ya, they did not want us to be more visible and active in mobilising people and organizing public rallies. This situation affected many people – especially the youth from the South left the country in big numbers to join the external wing of the liberation movement, SWAPO in early 70's and 80's. I left the country in 1983 in a group with 8 men (I was the only woman in the group) – thinking that maybe we could contribute better towards the liberation struggle and that our commitment would be appreciated. That was the thinking. Ya.

We entered into exile via Botswana and came into Zambia...then we proceeded to Angola by plane and we were received by other comrades and were taken to a transit camp. Transit camp in Luanda (the capital city of Angola) was where people went when they were waiting to be assigned or posted to different camps within Angola and abroad...for example, for studies, military training, to the battle field or rear bases/camps of SWAPO.

I can remember I was put in a tent where three women were, when we arrived at the camp that evening. They were Evelyn Bikeur, Sara !Khabes and Anna Petersen. I knew Anna Petersen from home, we are from the same village Gibeon. The women started talking to me in English, I hardly could express myself in English, and realising that they were speaking the same language as I was, I responded in Nama (my mother tongue). These women were not excited to see me, I was wondering why? Actually Anna asked me with whom I came and why I came. I was very surprised and angry. I asked her why she was so hostile, Anna did not respond and went back to her bed. My unpleasant experience in exile later made me understood why these women were not excited about us joining the external wing of the liberation movement. We spent two weeks at the transit camp and proceeded with a military convoy to

Lubango. The convoy was huge, loaded with some artillery, armoured vehicles, food, civilian people from home (referred to as new arrivals) and soldiers.

YC: And yourself, were you part of the military wing of SWAPO?

PD: You know, I never thought that I would not have a choice about how I want to contribute to the struggle. Entering Angola was almost like entering the war zone. I was not asked if I wanted to join the military wing of SWAPO or how I would like to contribute to the liberation struggle. When we arrived in Lubango, in the southern part of Angola, that is when we were given forms to sign, we were just told to sign, we were not even given the chance to read, and that is how we became part of the military wing of the liberation movement. So there was nothing like a choice. It was up to the leadership to see whether they will send us to school or send us to the front or wherever they felt like, or keep us in the rear bases.

YC: And were there many women enrolled in the military combat wing?

PD: Yes, we were told that everybody needs to be combat ready and you need to know when the enemy is attacking, what to do. So everybody was trained, men and women. Ya, of course, one thing that I could say of SWAPO is that both men and women were trained in military, although their roles were different. It was not easy for women to take positions in decision making structures. Women were involved for a number of reasons. As much as women were trained equally with men in almost all the fields, men had the advantage to take up leadership positions e.g. commanders, commissioners, military council and so on. Women would perform in the fields they were trained in but were rarely promoted to leadership positions in the army. They ended up mostly at the rear bases; women who were assigned to go to the battlefield could only work in the fields they were trained in, and in addition they served as girlfriends for the Chiefs. When you are a girlfriend to the Chief or the Commander or any high ranking male official, the chances were good that you would eat well, or would be sent for further education and taken out from the military wing.

YC: And yourself, were you involved in the training? What were your roles in that, the training and the actual roles you took on in Lubango and afterward within the military wing of SWAPO?

PD: I would not say I really was allocated a role in the military. The training that I got was that I was trained on how to handle a weapon and to be combat ready.

YC: What did that include?

PD: That included theory and practice of military training. I never enjoyed being in the military but did not have a choice. During the training we would be taught how to handle a gun; how to manoeuvre; how to camouflage not to be seen by enemy; to know the types of weapons SWAPO is using (where the weapons are made and by whom); political science; and we were given political education around African politics and liberation wars in Africa; the great leaders of Africa; how oppression started in Africa (slave trade) and how oppression started in Namibia; Eastern Europe Ideology and so on.

YC: Would you be willing to talk about the violence you experienced during your time in exile, especially as a woman? And maybe relate it to the work you are doing now?

PD: Violence was something one could not avoid experiencing. From my personal experience as a individual and as a woman I would say that the military in itself is a violent act. It limits the choices that people can make; it infringes on people's rights and limits the rights of the people. In the military you follow orders and do not ask questions. I think in my understanding, it contradicted the values and principles of the liberation struggle in a way. I understand that it was a way of putting pressure and responding to the enemy who oppressed us. But did it produce the results we wanted and did it produce democratic leadership in the end? That is debatable and I stand to be corrected, because at the end we had to negotiate for our liberation and did not gain our independence through the barrel of the gun as we were made to believe would happen.

As a woman, I experienced violence in so many ways. I must say I was more fortunate than many other women during the military training. I had people that I knew from home who would assist me with the basics i.e. bathing soap, Vaseline, toothpaste etc. Some women did not have this. They were abused by the commanders, chiefs, ordinary soldiers and had to do sexual favours for them in order to have the basics. Even to have food that was supplied to other camps (which was not available in the military camp) one was forced to do sexual favours. This is how difficult and humiliating it was in the training.

Me, I was called out at parades and insulted because I had refused to do sexual favours for the commanders; I refused to listen to a soldier that called me (and I knew why I was called, therefore refused to listen). I was invited to the huts of the commanders, actually commanded to go and clean their huts, and while I was busy cleaning the commander would come and demand to have sex in exchange for food. I refused and that is maybe one of the reasons

why I spent a year in the training, while others would proceed for further training after six months. I was listed to go to Cuba for further education but when final list came I was not part of that list. Maybe for the same reason.

Yes, there was violence. And people disappeared.

When the situation got tense, almost everyday people were disappearing. While in training, I sat down with my fiancé to discuss the future, which in fact was not in our hands. Seeing that people disappeared, and out of fear that we ourselves would be "disappeared" (because we felt that people from our region were a target, since they were the ones disappearing), we decided to have a child. Our thinking was that perhaps I could escape the disappearances if I was pregnant, or that one day this child could live to tell the story of what happened to the parents. We wanted to name this child "Survival" (whether a boy or girl). I was then placed in the maternity camp and my fiancé proceeded to the advance training to Tobias Hainyeko Military Training Centre.

I gave birth to a girl, Survival, and as a single woman I was faced with more upheaval. One thing that I must mention is that when you are a single woman, you were regarded as a lesser human being, a careless person, a prostitute and so on. I do not know where the rule was written but single women were not given any supplies that women may need. Married women had the advantage of getting clothing from the logistics (storage) as a standard procedure, but single women would get clothing only once in a while. Single women were not getting pots, dishes, forks, knives etcetera. Because there were no men to cook for. I had to go around the camps to steal these things to be able to have them. This was humiliating but I did not have a choice. In most cases I had to go around in the camps to beg for supplies that were available to some people in the camps.

After giving birth I was placed in a camp, and I later learned that it was a camp apparently meant for people who were suspected of being enemy agents. These camps did not get regular food, or clothing supplies.So the begging and stealing continued.

YC: How old were you then?

PD: Twenty two years. I gave birth to Survival on the 8th December 1984. I did not get nutrients as I should have during my pregnancy, and Survival was underweight at birth. This was the most difficult time - I felt so alone, but had to be strong for my child.

YC: Her name was Survival?

PD: Ya, she is the one who called me just now. Life became monotonous and

boring, so I thought I could do something to keep myself busy, apart from looking after my baby. I went to the office know as Marxist Youth Centre (MYC) and ask if they could grant me permission to go to the Education Centre and at least do some reading. The Commander told me that I was selfish and must give chances to others who did not have a chance in Namibia. I was shocked and disappointed as I was not educated at all, and only had secondary school education. I went back to my camp. I was called to the same office (MYC) and was told that I would work in the fields with immediate effect. I did not refuse and in fact did not have a choice but to obey the orders from the commander. However the work kept me busy all day, I would take Survival to the kindergarten on my way to work and collect her afterwards. This kept me from unnecessary drinking (something I did because of boredom). It was also a blessing in disguise as I could get fruits and vegetables to feed Survival and myself.

One day on my way to the fields, I met some villagers, who were selling. I wanted a tin of milk from them and asked if they could come back in the afternoon. While I was negotiating with the villagers, a man came by and offered to buy the milk for me. I told him that I did not have money to give to him and would exchange clothes with the villagers for the milk. He said he did not want payment and that I could have the milk. I thanked him and promised that I would give him money once I sold my clothes. This man came back in the afternoon, I offered him food and we sat and chatted. As it was getting late I asked to be excused to cook for Survival and prepare her for her bed. The man did not leave but said it was ok. It was really getting late and I wanted to sleep. He said he could not go back to his camp since it was far, then I offered him my place to sleep and explained I would sleep over at my friend's place. The man was furious, and started talking about the "favour" he did for me, buying the milk, and said that he wanted a sexual favour in return. I refused and went with my baby to my friends and stayed overnight there.

The next morning I was summoned to the office (MYC). When I entered the man was sitting there with the commander, and I was asked to tell the commander about the incident. I told the commander how everything started. The commander told me that it was a cultural practice of exchange and that I should not play with the feelings of the soldiers. I explained to him that it was not my culture and that I will not be able to do that. I left the office feeling scared and vulnerable.

These are just some of the violations that I have experienced while in exile

during the liberation struggle. I had never thought I would be discriminated against because I was a woman, a single woman , coming from a different region and speaking a different language.

YC: So it was an official expectation with the military hierarchy that women would give sexual pleasure on demand?

PD: Ya. Even in training, you know as we did not receive any supplies of cosmetics or soap. Girls would go out and come back with soap and this girl would get pregnant. She would not even know the father. Most of the time we only knew the soldiers through combat names. So you end up with "Bazooka's" child, you end up with "Artillary's" child or with "AK47". It was terrible. It was really terrible. Even in the training, soldiers would come in the afternoon, the last parade before we go to sleep. They would hang around there while the parade is on and they would call you after the parade – there is a certain word in Oshivambo called "*heikadona*" – "hey you, come here" – and I would never stop.

YC: So what happened when you stood firm and you didn't give in to those demands for sexual favours? What were the consequences for your stay there? You were there for six years.

Pauline: I can say that I stood firm, because I believed that the supplies that are provided by the peace loving countries were for us all. On the other hand the advantage of knowing people from home who came before me, in other camps I had also helped me to stood firm. I would not want to say that the women who succumbed to the demands for sexual favours did not stood firm; they were forced by soldiers and commanders abusing their power and they did not have a choice, in most cases.

In the end, what I can say is that I never had the opportunity, to meaningfully, as I would have wanted to contribute to the liberation struggle. And I never had the opportunity to be sent for studies. I spent three years in the SWAPO camps, and another three years in the SWAPO dungeons.

YC: And you were in the dungeons for what?

PD: I was accused of being an enemy agent. I was taken to the information centre. I was asked about my enemy activities. I said I don't know. I am not an enemy agent and if you have doubts you could asked people at home or know me from home. I was stripped naked. When they first said undress, I thought it was a joke or to scare me. I took off the red jacket I had on top. I removed the sandals/shoes. They told me to remove all my clothes and I stood there. I did not have a bra on. I was there standing like this [gesture] standing and

they started beating me with sticks and said "We are serious, take off your clothes", until I remained in my panty.

I was tied by my legs, my hands were tied behind me. I was blindfolded with a cloth in my mouth and I was beaten by five men with sticks all over my body and you know, the beating did not stop. I did not give in to say I was an enemy agent. And I was taken back to the room where I was kept/ detained. Coming to the room, two ladies were waiting for me with boiled water, they dumped a cloth in the water and put on the fresh wounds on my body. I screamed and was told to shut up. This method was called "*tumba*" in Oshivambo language, it was apparently to prevent marks on your body or make marks on your body fewer.

It continued, the same routine continued until one day I was now taken to a different room. And when I entered there, this room was full of broken sticks full of blood, human hair, you could smell blood, you could tell that something terrible had been going on in this room. From what I have seen and experienced, it is possible that people even died there. I was tied again and the beating continued. They tried to hang me upside down, but I could not stand, and I fell from the poles, I think I fell three times from there.

Later on they asked me to dig a hole there, that was now my own grave. And they buried me with my face down, put sand on me and I collapsed. I mean, I don't know what happened after that and I found myself sitting flat in the sand and there was nobody then in the room. And I sat there for a while, I was so confused. Then they came again with a bundle of sticks saying that this is your combat food. They started beating and beating and beating, it went on until I said "Yes, I am an enemy agent".

They took me to the front office, I was still naked and what happened actually was that I started menstruating and I was taken back and I had to change the panty - I did not have a second one. I had these girls that were sleeping with me in that room, maybe guarding me, who gave me pads which I put on, but I did not have a panty. So I had to walk like this [gesture] to keep this thing. When I came in the office the torture started again, I tried to explain that I am on my menses, I am menstruating. Then they did not believe me and they forced me to undress and there I was naked again in front of these five men. And they started beating me, this time they did not tie me, and saying "This time do I want to bewitch them?" standing naked with the pad, aaaah...

YC: And this was your experience for some time, in and out of torture?

PD: In and out and even when I said I was an enemy agent, I did not have a clue what it meant. And when they brought me and said I now had to narrate my statement that they wrote. I said "But Comrades, please, I am not an agent, I don't know what you want". And they were very angry and I was actually pushed off the chair I was sitting on and they stepped on me and beat me. I said again "Yes, I am an enemy agent" and I had to think, I had to think very hard what to say.

YC: Pauline, you went through a lot in those six years and I know the work that you are doing now is around what you experienced and what others experienced in Lubango and other camps. Tell me about the link what you experienced in Lubango, the violence, the accusations, the torture and the work you are doing now.

PD: The work that I do now is the result of the violence and atrocities that were committed by SWAPO against its own people during the liberation struggle in exile. People were violated and are still violated because they are denied the right to know, they are not given to chance to prove their innocence, there is no commission of enquiry in this matter. People disappeared and are not accounted for even now. Again people and families of the missing persons are denied the right to know the whereabouts of their loved ones. No one should be disappeared and families and Namibia has the right to know what happened to them. These unsolved disappearances are continued violations that we experience as the survivors and families of the missing persons.

The purpose of my work is to ensure that this history does not repeat itself in Namibia and that we will have a peaceful country. It is to deter the recurrence of such evil crimes. Also to teach Namibians that violence is a crime and to torture people is wrong.

It is also to document the testimonies of the survivors and families of the missing persons and by so doing contribute to the true history of the Namibian people. To build on the values and principles as they were once set out for the liberation of this country.

I always say that the work I do now – driving *Breaking the Wall of Silence* – is a child of SWAPO. They gave birth to *Breaking the Wall of Silence.* Had I not experienced that violation and torture and humiliation I don't think that we would have the organisation *Breaking the Wall of Silence* today. It is directly linked with that.

YC: Tell me more about that.

PD: What we are doing is recognizing that people went missing, as I said.

People went missing. Even when we were released, people did not come home. And what we are asking is what happened, where are these people, if they are alive, what happened? If they are dead, where are the graves? That is what we are asking. The other thing to account for is why were we violated in such a way, why was our trust betrayed? Why were we denied the opportunity to contribute towards the struggle as we wanted to contribute. Why were we imprisoned? Why people died, why were these people killed? You know, finding answers to these questions - this is the core business of my work that I do.

Ya, and this has a direct link to that violence that took place some years back. What we do is to document these stories of the survivors. We tell what happened and also try to bring that missing puzzle piece of our history to the fore. Because it is never talked about and it's suppressed and if we don't tell as survivors what we have experienced then no-one will know.

YC: Based on all these experiences of violence and your work to change society, I am interested in your notion of peace. What is peace to you?

PD: Peace for me, to start with, is the inner peace that I need within myself. Peace is generated by the things that I believe in , the things that I am fighting for, and this includes the urge of wanting to know what happened to these people, wanting to know why I was violated in such a way. If I could have these answers from SWAPO; if SWAPO could look at the impact that this had on us as individuals, then I will have deep peace .

I would also want to know about the whereabouts of the missing persons. When SWAPO would be able to look at the impact that the disappearances, detention and torture have on survivors and families of the missing persons, and address issues accordingly and jointly with us then I will refer to that as a peaceful resolution or transformation of the conflict. When we can jointly look at the mental and physical wellbeing of those who were and are tortured and find suitable remedies than that would be peace.

We are like outcasts in our own country, the only country we belong to. It is like we are different from the rest of the people and if this could be solved without being transferred to the next generation. If we could pave a way for the generation that comes after us, that would mean a lot to me and that would bring a peace of mind to me because I will know from the work that I do I would have contributed in a small way to make a difference is someone's life.

I am still trying to find out the purpose of a military which I don't

understand and if I had that power and the opportunity to say we don't need a military I would. That is how I also got involved in the small arms programme where I am trying to take out weapons from family homes. These small arms fuel domestic violence, more women are killed with these weapons. And to me, these weapons are meant to kill, why do you have a deadly thing in your house?

If I could achieve a new way of understanding the dangers of "domestic arms", by maybe changing laws, that would contribute to peace. Because we are now advocating for the amendment of the Fire Arms Act that gives permission to anybody above eighteen to carry a gun. So I am trying to contribute to reduce violence as much as I can especially at the community level. And that is how I am living – to make peace in my own inner heart by fighting for peace in other places and homes.

YC: Thank you for sharing these stories, Pauline.

PD: Thank you for giving me the opportunity to tell my stories and write about them.

Profile:
One of the Very Few Places in the Country without Abuse: The Saartjie Baartman Centre for Women and Children, Cape Town

Irma Maharaj, Saartjie Baartman Centre for Women and Children

Gender-based violence (GBV) against women remains extremely high in South Africa with research suggesting that a woman is killed every six hours by an intimate or ex-partner in South Africa (Mathews, et al., 2004). According to the South African Police Services statics published in *The Crime Situation in South Africa for the period 1 April 2009-31 March 2010*, 250 000 violent crimes were perpetrated against women and children over the year-long period. This is an average of nearly 700 incidents per day. Sexual offences against women rose by nearly 20%. Child murder rose by 122 to 965 during the same period – an increase of nearly 15% since the previous period. Attempted murder of children rose by 331 cases to 1 113 cases – an increase of over 42%, while sexual offences against children rose by 36%. (SAPS 2010).

Research suggests that sexual assault is often under reported as evidenced in a study conducted by the Medical Research Council of South Africa in 2005, which revealed that only one in nine rape survivors reported the incident to SAPS. One can therefore assume that at least some of the categories of the aforementioned crime are under reported and that the actual rates are much higher. The extent of GBV against women and children is difficult to quantify because much of the abuse takes place behind closed doors. The sometimes lifelong physical and psychological effects of GBV on women and children are well documented.

Despite sound legislation such as the Domestic Violence Act and the Children's Act, there have been continued and arguably increased levels of heinous crimes being perpetrated against women and children based on gender. Government has failed in its attempts to address the scourge; it has

failed to effectively monitor and evaluate implementation of legislation and it has failed to develop strategies, with civil society, to transform notions of what is 'acceptable" behavior, especially for men.

The Saartjie Baartman Centre for Women and Children (SBCWC) is a 'one-stop' centre that was established in 1999, in response to the high levels of violence against women. The Centre is situated in Manenberg, a township on the Cape Flats, where levels of violence, especially against women and children, are unacceptably high. The area also has very high levels of substance abuse, gang activity, and unemployment, while levels of education and employment skills are low. Although these are not reasons for violence, they are contributing factors to the high levels of crime, and violence perpetrated against women and children.

The SBCWC provides a range of services for women and children who have experienced GBV, as well as empowering programmes aimed at helping to increase agency of our clients. The Centre could be regarded as one of the pioneers of the "one-stop" centre partnership model, which brings together a range of relevant service providers under one roof. Having services available at a single venue helps to reduce secondary trauma as the survivor is not required to repeat her story to each service provider she engages with. It also reduces security risks by her not being required to travel to the various services. Further, it is economical as it cuts down on travelling costs.

The Centre has forged on-and off-site partnerships with non-governmental organizations (NGOs); government departments; local, national and international universities; funding organizations; and corporate companies.

The closest to the 'one-stop' centre model that we are aware of are the Family Justice Centers (FJCs) in the United States of America (USA), the first of which was established in San Diego in 2002. Currently, there are over sixty FJC's operating in the USA and similar centres in Mexico, Jordan, Canada and the United Kingdom. The FJC's are coordinated either by community-based shelters, police departments or the District Attorney's Offices. (Gwinn, C. et al. 2010). Government's participation serves to significantly strengthen the USA centres and the services they deliver. These centres enjoy greater buy-in and cooperation from their government departments than their South African counterparts.

The vision of the Saartjie Baartman Centre is to work towards creating a safe and secure society and a human rights culture where women and children have agency to exercise their full rights. The Centre endeavours to achieve this

by remaining client-centered, offering services that are relevant, and being guided by feminist principles.

The majority of the women who access the Centre's services come from poverty-stricken backgrounds and have limited formal education and employment skills. Clients come from areas such as Manenberg, Mitchell's Plain, Heideveld, Delft, Hanover Park Gugulethu, Khayelitsha, Hazendal, Elsies River, among others. The Centre also assists women from surrounding rural area, other provinces and occasionally other countries. Assistance is offered to women who have been trafficked locally and internationally and extends its services when called upon to do so in cases of emergency. An example of this is when the Centre provided accommodation and basic provisions to foreign nationals who were rendered homeless as a result of the xenophobic violence in South Africa in 2008.

Over the past ten years, the Centre has grown from a partnership of two to ten on-site organisations and a staff component of six to twenty permanent employees. During this time, SBC has provided services to thousands of women, children and youth and in the past year 2 460 women and youth accessed our services (excluding partner clients) – an increase of nearly 15% since the previous year.

Services and activities include emergency and medium-term accommodation, counseling, life and job skills training, legal assistance, research, education and awareness-raising, and advocacy and lobbying. The Centre participates at various GBV-related forums, including trafficking, special needs housing, shelter focus groups, and groups making parliamentary submissions. The Centre is also regularly invited to attend local and international forums. The following is a brief outline of the Centre's projects and programmes.

Partnership and programme coordination

The project ensures the smooth-running of the Centre partnership. It assists with finding solutions to potential problem in the partnership and helps to identify gaps in services and source relevant service providers. It also coordinates strategic planning, and monitoring and evaluation of the partnership.

Further, the project coordinator supervises both local and international psychology interns from the University of the Western Cape (UWC), Bergen University, Norway and Chapel Hill University in North Carolina.

Shelter and second-stage housing

Saartjie Baartman Shelter

Twenty-four hour emergency and medium-term accommodation is offered to women survivors and their children. The shelter has the capacity to accommodate a maximum of twenty women and double the number of children, and houses an approximate average of 170 women and 205 children per annum. Women are able to stay in the shelter for up to four months, after which time, they may apply for medium-term accommodation for up to a year. The medium-term accommodation comprises ten self-contained "second-stage" units located on the premises. This option is available for women who feel they need additional time before being emotionally ready to reintegrate into their communities.

Clients are encouraged to participate in as many programmes as they are able to in order to reap maximum benefit. The shelter has a fulltime social worker who conducts individual and group counseling sessions. The women have easy access to the Centre's legal advisors, who assist with family-related legal matters.

The shelter has a childcare centre, which operates weekdays. It runs programmes for the little ones and provides aftercare for the school-going children. This frees the mothers to attend shelter programmes or to go out and work. Counselling services are provided for the children where needed, and the Child Guidance Clinic at University of Cape Town will be joining as a partner in 2011.

Eerste Begin Shelter

The Centre, in partnership with the Cape Winelands Municipality opened a second shelter in Worcester, a rural area in the Western Cape Province, where levels of domestic violence and substance abuse are extremely high. The shelter is able to accommodate eight women and their children for up to three months or longer if they are not emotionally ready to leave or if they are still seeking alternative accommodation. Twenty-five women and 28 children were housed in the past year. Most of the women come from Worcester and surrounding areas such as De Doorns, Robertson and Rawsonville.

Residents receive individual and group counseling from the shelter's social workers and have access to Saartjie Baartman Centre's legal advisors. They

are encouraged to participate in training workshops to gain as many skills as possible during their stay at the shelter. Skills development programmes include first aid, basic counseling, home management, beading, card-making and decoupage courses.

Recently, the shelter set up a vegetable garden, which they expect will provide the residents with nutritional vegetables as well as generate an income from the sale of excess produce.

Economic empowerment

Great emphasis is placed on economic empowerment of Centre and shelter clients with a range of life and job skills training programmes being run either by shelter staff or partner organisations. Unemployed women from the community are able to participate as it is felt that those who might be in abusive or potentially abusive relationships would benefit from the programme as a means of empowerment.

Programmes include, among others, parenting skills, HIV/AIDS awareness raising, first aid, home-based care, computer training, cashier/sales training, card-making and beading. Shelter residents are offered income-generating tasks such as canteen assistance, cleaning and car-washing. These serve to provide a modest income for the women during their stay at the shelter. The job skills manager assists the women with preparation of their curricula vitae and job placement opportunities.

Kitchen and catering project

This project runs a canteen that provides meals and snacks for Centre and partner staff members. Shelter resident have a cooked meal every day which is prepared by the kitchen staff. The kitchen offers a catering service to on- and off-site partners, which generates a substantial income that contributes to sustainability of the Centre.

Legal advice, assistance and research

The Legal Project was established at the Centre in 2004 in partnership with the Gender Project at the Community Law Centre, UWC. The Project has, however, been operating on its own since 2009 when the Community Law Centre left the partnership. The Centre's two paralegals offer legal advice and assistance to Centre and shelter clients, as well as training to relevant government departments, other NGOs and community members. The aim of

the project is to improve access to justice for women survivors of GBV. Clients are assisted with applications for protection orders, maintenance, divorce and other related matters. Other focus areas include legal rights awareness-raising workshops, and advocacy and lobbying. The project has an agreement with the Cape Law Society's pro bono services to provide services when needed.

Over the past year, the project has provided legal advice and assistance to 1 749 clients, an increase of 25% from the previous year. This includes 827 new clients and the rest being repeat clients seeking ongoing assistance.

Research project

The SBC research project, which was established in 2004, researches GBV-related topics relevant to the Centre, collects and analyses statistical data, conducts monitoring and evaluation, and facilitates a digital storytelling project, among others.

Projects include documenting the development of the Centre, compiling a manual of guidelines on how to establish a 'one-stop' centre and economic empowerment of women survivors of GBV. The digital storytelling project produced a DVD, *Women of Strength: I have a story to tell* and is currently (September 2010) conducting a digital diaries project. Main aims of the digital storytelling project are to strategically use information and technology to combat GBV against women, to help empower and increase the agency of often voiceless women, and to create a platform for sharing stories in order to raise awareness about GBV to a wide audience. Participants reported that the process of telling their stories have been cathartic and assisted with continued healing.

A process of monitoring and evaluation is being implemented to assess the impact the Centre's services are having on the lives of our clients in the longer-term. Results will help to inform what is working and where changes need to be made. It will also help to highlight potential problems in the various projects.

Counseling and awareness coordination

The Counseling and Awareness-raising Project, which does outreach work in communities and schools, aims to raise awareness among the general public about the prevalence and effects of GBV. Last year, the project ran a six-week pilot programme at Christell House, in which 249 learners were equipped with skills to identify domestic violence, increase their self-esteem and handle

situations of conflict. During the past year, 2 445 community members/ schoolchildren and 220 nursing students benefitted from awareness-raising talks and workshops.

The project also coordinates the Centre's intake assessments. This is done by recruiting psychology and social work students to do their internship as intake workers at the Centre. The students are from the Departments of Psychology and Social Work at UWC, University of Cape Town, the University of South Africa and the South African College of Applied Psychology. The project provides ongoing supervision and emotional support for the interns, and assists with case work management.

When the SBWC is profiled in a piece such as this one, it is difficult to see behind the written paragraphs the living bodies and hear the voices of the hundreds of women and children who live in, and visit, the SBWC spaces, people and services, annually. The Centre however is an amazingly dynamic, energized, and exciting organization. Most importantly, it is one of the very few places in the country *without* abuse of the kind which destroys so many women and children's wellbeing in South Africa and explicitly committed to staying exactly that way.

References

Gwinn, C. with Strack, G. 2010. *Dream Big: A Simple, Complicated Idea to Stop Family Violence.* Wheatmark, Arizona, USA.

Mathews, S. et al. June 2004. *"Every six hours a woman is killed by her intimate partner": A National Study of Female Homicide in South Africa.* MRC Policy Brief No. 5. Gender and Health Group, Medical Research Council, Tygerberg, South Africa. (www.mrc.ac.za/policybriefs/woman.pdf).

Medical Research Council of South Africa. 2005. (www.mrc.ac.za).

South African Police Services. 2010. *The Crime situation in South Africa for the period 1 April 2009-March 2010.* (www.saps.gov.za).

Profile
There is Hope...We are Not Giving Up

Kasha Jacqueline, Director of Freedom and Roam Uganda

Beginnings

Freedom and Roam Uganda (FARUG) is the only exclusively lesbian, bisexual and transgender organization in Uganda. It was founded by three lesbian-identified women on July 4, 2003 in a bar, one which the media at the time frequently referred to as a "lesbian bar". Many Kampala-based lesbians who heard about the possibility of a "lesbian bar" space started coming to hang out and make new friends. It became a second and safe home for many. In April of that year those of us who has started to use this space were approached to "join up with other lesbians", by a group of men who claimed to be part of a lesbian organization by the name Makerere University Students Lesbians Association (MUSLA). When we asked them where the lesbians were and why it was led by men, they said that the women were "shy." Later we did some research and learnt that these men were not university students nor did any such organization exist. There was clearly a need for some kind of organizing .

So as three lesbian women sat at the bar one evening, FARUG was founded. Many of us felt that we needed to start an organization to fight back against all the harassment and violence that we were facing every time we left the bar to go back to our homes and yet we knew that it would not be easy to do this given the dangers of the widespread homophobia that prevailed. In our experience, many lesbian women had been beaten, raped and assaulted by men who would wait for us at night on our way home from the bar. Many of these women were homeless, jobless, poor and had dropped out of school. For the majority, the reason for their suffering was simply the fact that they were lesbians.

The first year of FARUG was difficult. There were very few resources, and

those running the organization were working as volunteers. It was hard to prioritize our advocacy and activism issues, because much of the immediate work involved the containment of crises of violence happening to those we knew and there was a pressing need just to collect basic information about the violence against lesbian, gay, and transgendered people from all walks of life in Uganda.

Challenges drive us forward

A year after the founding of FARUG (2004), a lesbian committed suicide at a secondary school in Kampala. She was caned at the school assembly after school officials finding love letters she had written to a fellow student. Later she was suspended from school. FARUG learnt that while at home, her family treated her horribly throughout the suspension period. When the suspension was over, she was returned to the school by her parents who gave permission to the school authorities to flog her before the entire school community. A few days later, she decided to take her life.

Neither the government nor human rights organizations condemned the treatment that she received from the school authorities. It was then that FARUG took up the case and publicly condemned the actions of the school authorities and the silence of government and human rights organizations in the media. That was the beginning of a long struggle. FARUG became known to the public. Some members were not comfortable with this and left for fear of being exposed. Other lesbian identifying women joined the organization. Those who left did so in a bid to protect themselves and their identities. It was and still is very understandable for our members to stay in the closet to the outside world. Many have a lot to lose and not many can sacrifice like a few who have done.

The vision

The vision of FARUG is an organization which strives for the attainment of full equal rights of Lesbians, Bisexuals, Transgender and Intersexual (LBTI) persons, the removal of all forms of discrimination based on sexual orientation and the empowerment of LBTI people.

In the past few years many members of FARUG were fearful of calling themselves feminists because of what is said about feminists and feminist thinkers (they are seen as "home breakers", "hateful women", "women who have no pride in their cultures"). However, during the FARUG 1st leadership

Institute in June 2010, many members realized that they are actually unapologetic feminists and are now proud to call themselves feminists because the struggle for a world in which gender and sexuality do not lead to systems of oppression is, fundamentally, a feminist one in Africa.

We are now a small, well-known, and growing organization run by relatively inexperienced individuals who use their passion to create awareness, safe spaces for other LBT persons and to create a hospitable and respectful environment for ourselves. Many of us in FARUG administration are taking on posts and roles but have a lot to learn about how they function. FARUG has some resources, but not nearly enough to do the amount of work needed to create safe spaces for all those who need it in Uganda. However, through our biggest strength which has been networking and lobbying, we have managed to gain lots of experience and skills from other progressive social movements like the women's and feminist movements.

We are on the road...

The last seven years have not been easy but we knew from the start that it was never going to be easy to run an LBTI organization in a country like Uganda. That recognition has given us more and more strength to continue the struggle. At particular moments, some of us have not been able to cope with the growing amounts of public hostility and have decided to move back into "invisibility" and give support from underground. This is something the rest of us understand completely, given our context, and we are not judgmental about others' decisions. We believe this organization will be around long enough for them to rejoin it.

Over the years, we have become "professional in our unprofessionalism" as many members term it in the organization. We have pulled together the few skills we all have and managed to run successful projects and activities. Our first Awareness Campaign in 2007 was such a huge success that many gay men in the country started to apply to become members our lesbian organization. Issues of separatism were raised and gay men started asking why we were a lesbian-only group and why we were demanding a safe space for lesbians without including the issues faced by gay and transgendered people.

Members of FARUG gave many of reasons for our decision (I guess my reason at the time was one of the "dimmest"......*because we are lesbians so we don't need men in our space*...) and now I really do know why we are a

lesbian-only group. It's straightforward: FARUG members didn't want men, regardless of their sexual orientation or background, to come and impose their authority over us as they have done in all other spheres of life.

Over the years, however, gay men continue to come to FARUG for help and support and we have rendered it to them even if we are not a mixed group. We believe that even if we are a lesbian-only group, we are seen as "sexual minorities" just like our gay brothers are, and we have to support each other in whichever way possible. This, however, does not mean that we have to deny our commitment to lesbian principles and identities, which are at the heart of our organization.

Over the years our name "Freedom and Roam' has really impacted on us. We want to be free and to be able to roam everywhere and that is exactly what we are doing. Many members of FARUG in the past years have been appointed to positions in regional and international organizations, Boards of other LGBTI-focused organizations, and called upon to speak and advise at national, regional and international fora.

Through support from International foundations and agencies we have managed to maintain a resource center which also operates as our office since 2007.We have managed to carry out activities, projects and campaigns which was very hard to do in the past. We have also managed to meet regularly and share experiences, meet new people and learn from each other. We call our resource centre "a home away from home". We watch movies every Friday afternoon; movies we cannot watch in our actual homes. We read books, magazines and also hold workshops that impact on our lives. Without this space, we would not have been able to talk openly about sex, pleasure, or safer sex. Sometimes we invite our men friends over for social interactions or for workshops that reflect on the gay movement in general. (We don't HATE men as many say we do!). In fact many of us have men as best friends, but we also have to remember that we are women who love women in many diverse ways and that at some times we need an exclusive space to interact.

Successes!

Among our success we would count:
- a two year project on "Unveiling the myths about homosexuality", Awareness Campaign 2007 which saw our very first publications produced, which included a newsletter with real life-stories from our members, FARUG profiles (both in English and Luganda), and

domestic violence, HIV/AIDS and health brochures. Lovely T-shirts were printed. "Yesterday I saw a camera man at a wedding reception wearing a FARUG T-shirt. I wonder whether he really knows or he is just wearing it because it's a beautiful T-shirt!" said a member in 2007 during the Awareness campaign.

- a training on Human Rights and LGBTI issues funded by the Swedish International development Agency, and participation in exchange programmes between our members and members of The Swedish Federation on Lesbian, Gay and Transgender organization (RFSL).

- a hate crime campaign themed HATE NO MORE which is currently what we are working on

- we hope that our current shadow CEDAW report will make an impact at the UN CEDAW committee in Geneva this year and hope our recommendations will be put into practice.

We also work very closely with other LGBTI organizations in the country, region and internationally. Because of our core values which are selflessness, teamwork, accountability, transparency, respect and discipline, we are the local hosts of the Uganda LGBTI PAL project which is a three year project for the entire community in partnership with RFSL. This is a big achievement for us bearing in mind that there are over six LGBTI organizations in Uganda.

In conclusion

Overall, we are proud Lesbians and not ashamed of who we are. The future as it stands now is very frightening especially with the parliamentary proposals of a tougher law against us and our activities. But that doesn't mean that we are giving up. We have lined up a number of projects and activities for the coming years and we are very hopeful there will be some changes in many aspects of our lives.

For now the struggle continues.

Review:

Vicky Karimi

A situation analysis of the women survivors of the 1989-2003 armed conflict in Liberia – A research report written by Isis WICCE in collaboration with the Ministry of Gender and Development in Liberia and the Women in Peacebuilding Network Program of the West Africa Network for Peace (WANEP).

Sixty-three per cent of the women respondents interviewed in this study were found to have suffered some form of sexual torture with other torture experiences also reported. These included *single episode rape, gang rape, sexual comforting, attempted rape, forced marriage, abduction with sex, defilement, forced insertion of objects in the vagina and forced widow inheritance* amongst others. This is the chilling reality presented by this research report.

The report follows a situational analysis of the women survivors of the 1989-2003 armed conflict in Liberia carried out in four counties of Liberia namely, Bong, Lofa, Maryland and Grand Kru, between March and April 2008. The overall aim of the research and documentation was to inform decision-makers, policy makers and activists and enable them to access appropriate information to effectively respond to the strategic and practical needs of women in post conflict Liberia.

The first chapter provides an introduction and background on Liberia and outlines the nature and extent of the conflict, while the second and third describe the research process and methodology. The impact of the demographic status of survivors is clearly outlined in the report as are the psychological, medical and social consequences of the experiences of torture during the conflict. The final chapters of the situational analysis delve into the economic, reproductive health and gynaecological consequences of the armed conflict on survivors. The research report concludes with recommendations.

The situational analysis differentiates the impact of sexual and gender based violence on socio demographic and economic status and separately examines various sectors such as education, marriage, women and child headed households, agricultural sector, employment, transport and

communication, housing and the Disarmament, Demobilisation, Rehabilitation and Re-integration Programme (DDRR). This overview enables the reader to have a holistic picture of the situation of women survivors in post –conflict Liberia. Current and relevant data on the socio-demographic characteristics and economic status of women survivors of the conflict such as provided here allows for the design of better responses during the reconstruction period of the country.

In its breakdown of the violations experienced, the analysis describes unimaginable physical atrocities such as 'severe tying', 'burning with molten plastic' and 'suffocation with red pepper' as having been rampantly practised during the war. Some of the atrocities described are particularly shocking and will indeed be new to many readers. Other forms of physical torture commonly reported to have taken place during this conflict include beatings and kicking's, burning with fire, being forced to carry heavy loads over long distances and being forced to sleep in the bush or swamps for extended periods of time (Isis-WICCE, 1999, 2001, 2002, 2006; Kinyanda, 2000a).

The report notes that:

"Women suffered severe physical and mental consequences of gender-based violence, were discriminated against, marginalized and sexually assaulted and therefore carried their own burden of shame and many kept silent. In addition, women continue suffering from the effects of sexual violence and other violations due to the absence of functional systems and structures with professional staff for treating and managing the sexual and reproductive health complications, as well as psychological trauma."

It further notes that:

"The culture of violence that has arisen as a consequence of this long armed conflict has led to the militarization of intimate relations, which has spawned a secondary epidemic of domestic violence, including sexual abuse. Indeed the Liberian National Police today reports that rape and other sexual offences are the number one crimes in this country. The fact that 68% of women interviewed were found to have experienced some form of sexual violation during the war and the situational analysis rape was the number one reported crime in the country at the time of publishing the findings in November 2008 bears testament to the assertion that indeed there is no aftermath for women."

The findings of the analysis show that the level of sexual abuse undoubtedly escalated the prevalence of sexually transmitted infections, including HIV/AIDS. Due to all of the above factors, and the fact that women and girl war survivors have urgent reproductive health problems, the report finds it essential to establish special holistic programmes that target women and girls' sexual and reproductive health. It recommends *interalia* that these services should receive adequate funding, be easily accessible and with well-trained health workers. In a very practical way it succeeds in making the interlinkage between HIV/AIDS, Gender based violence and conflict which is one that is often overlooked in post conflict reconstruction. Indeed it notes that the lack of education on how HIV/AIDS infection occurs coupled with high levels of stigma and discrimination that women living with HIV/AIDS continue to experience in Liberia means that ..." *there is likely to be a rapid spread of HIV/AIDS in a very short time.*"

The situational analysis used both quantitative and qualitative research methodologies. This approach of mixed method research methodology may be a useful way to bridge the gap between documenting the work of activists on the ground and providing accurate data without losing the voice of the women. Feminists must allow the context and purpose of the research to guide the research design, tools and techniques.

> "Indeed, a key challenge for African feminists remains the need to create knowledges which both emerge from the diverse and complex contexts in which we live and work and speak to such contexts with sufficient resonance to sustain innovative and transformative action. Designing research methodologies capable of addressing the questions which compel us constitutes a politics in its right, demanding a re-evaluation of received approaches and sophisticated reflection on the intersections of theory and practice as researchers and writers" (Bennett, 2008: 4)

By using both quantitative and qualitative research approaches this report exemplifies a approach to material on survivors of sexual violence which draws from a feminist lens in a post conflict setting in Liberia. In this sense it is groundbreaking. The challenge for feminist-oriented research is always to identify relevant research methods that will be able to unpack and interrogate the dominance of positivist research methods while simultaneously offering access to credible representations of the lived experiences of women.

Isis-WICCE's research team consisted of 31 people; 16 were research

assistants, three of whom were men. The use of a research team that consisted primarily of Liberian women with the lived experience of the context, already working in peace and reconciliation efforts, allowed the researchers to collect data that may have not been as easily accessible to any other group. There was an emphasis on in depth interviews, group discussions as well as various participatory and action research methods. The experience of the lead organisation in peace building in the country presents added perspective, positioning and theorization in the analysis of the material co-created.[1] Geographically, the research area included previously under-researched regions to gain more in depth information and understandings about the effects of the conflict in the most remote and isolated counties. This approach enabled the inclusion of voices of women survivors who would have otherwise been marginalized.

Collaboration with the Ministry of Gender and Development, University of Makerere and civil society organisations such as Women in Peace building Network (WIPNET) was of added benefit and allowed the researchers to access medical and psychosocial support structures and address mental health issues that have previously been left out in responding to survivors of conflict.

What the report succeeds in doing very well is laying down the stark reality of the experiences of women during the war in a way that has not been previously done. The percentages of women who have experienced sexual violations are shocking to the reader and provoke thought and action. Disaggregation of the data according to gender, age, allows for closer analysis in the different sectors. It provides the widest and most accurate representation of survivors of sexual violence in Liberia available to date.

The analysis provides a valuable addition to the prevailing discourse on the distinct manner in which women experience conflict. The data presented can be used to design reparation programmes that provide redress women more fairly and efficiently and seek to subvert the gender hierarchies that preceded the conflict and continue to hold in the Liberian society.

In conclusion, the report is a multi–pronged advocacy tool that can be used for strategic planning and targeted action by Government, civil society, funders and other relevant stakeholders during the reconstruction phase in Liberia. In addition, this report is undoubtedly a solid historical narrative of the experiences of women during the war; it is indeed a voicing of the women's story in Liberia. It is an excellent resource and is recommended for use in any further work that seeks to address the experience of Liberian

women during the 1989-2003 war.

References

Bennett, J. 2008. Editorial. *Feminist Africa 11*

Meintjes, S., A. Pillay and M. Turshen. (eds.) 2001. *The Aftermath: Women in Post – Conflict Transformation.* London: Zed. Books

Turshen, M. and C. Twagiramariya (eds.) 1998. *What Women Do in Wartime: Gender and Conflict in Africa.* New York: Zed Books, Ltd

End notes

1.   Isis Women International Cross Cultural Exchange (WICCE) has worked extensively in Liberia including training Liberian women's organisations and activists in civil society on peace building, running a Peace building Institute for women from 22 countries in Liberia in 2008/2009. Since 2007, Isis WICCE in conjunction with UAF-Africa has also undertaken a project to interrogate the interlinkage between HIV/AIDS, Conflict and Gender Based Violence in Liberia, Uganda and Zimbabwe.

Contributors

Adelene Africa is a researcher and teacher at the University of Cape Town, South Africa. She has worked in the Department of Psychology and the African Gender Institute, and is very near to the completion of her PhD dissertation which explores the meaning of violence in the narratives of South African women incarcerated for criminal violence.

Eva Ayiera has worked with the Urgent Action Fund, in the Nairobi office, since 2008, as a Programme Officer. She is a human rights lawyer, and works on the transformation of epistemological frameworks so as to drive forward activism and research on African women's rights.

Jane Bennett is currently the Head of Department of the African Gender Institute, at the University of Cape Town. She is the author of articles and books in the areas of sexualities, gender, and violence and works as a teacher, writer, and organizational activist.

Yaliwe Clarke is a researcher and teacher within the African Gender Institute, at the University of Cape Town. Her research and activist experience and interests are in gender, peace-building, and conflict within African contexts. She has worked with the Centre for Conflict Resolution as a facilitator and trainer, and is currently writing a PhD dissertation on women and peace-building initiatives in eastern and southern Africa.

Pauline Dempers is the co-founder and National Coordinator of Breaking the Wall of Silence, in Namibia, an NGO committed to redressing the violent legacies of the SWAPO-led war of liberation in Namibia. She was trained as a SWAPO combatant in these years, and also spent time in the Ministry of Defence in Namibia after independence.

Kasha Jacqueline is the founder and director of Freedom and Roam, Uganda, the first NGO in Uganda to openly advocate for the rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, trasngendered and intersexd people. She has recently been recognized by Velvetpark as one of 2010's most significant queer people in the fight for *lgbti* rights.

Vicky Karimi has a legal background and in 2010, she spent a year as a selected participant on the Peace and Security Fellowship for African Women, run by Kings College in London. She is affiliated with Urgent Action Fund, as a programme officer, and with the Association for Women in Development (AWID).

Irma Maharaj is a researcher at the Saartjie Baartman Centre for Women and Children, in Cape Town, a partnership NGO which provides a wide range of services for abused womem and children, and plays a key advocacy and leadership role in networking and policy-making around shelters, law reform work, and heathcare in South Africa.

Godwin Murunga is a researcher and teacher in the Department of History, Archaeology and Political Studies at the University of Kenyatta, Nairobi. He has held research grants from CODESRIA, and the Ford Foundation (among others) and published in the areas of urbanization, the politics of knowledge production, and African feminisms and masculinities.

Anu Pillay currently works in Liberia, with Medica Mondial, in the co-design and implementation of programmes focused on transformation in contexts of conflict, and transitional justice. She has worked for decades in South Africa, Zambia, and other countries as a researcher, coach, activist and participant in confronting violence against women, and growing networks of women (and men).

Fatima Sadiqi is a senior researcher and teacher in the Department of Linguistics and Gender at the University of Fez, Morocco, and the Director of the ISIS Centre for Women and Development. She has authored books and numerous articles on Moroccan languages, poetry, and women's issues. She was recently elected President of Morocco's National Union of Women's Associations.

Call for contributions:
Feminist Africa 15

Feminist Africa 15

The theme for *Feminist Africa* 15 is linked to some of the questions raised in *Feminist Africa* 14 concerning the rights in the context of debates about gender, violence and sexualities. *Feminist Africa* 15 will focus specifically on the feminist legal activism of the past fifteen years, which has sought to create radical change in the legal frameworks which determine women's access to status, reproductive and sexual rights, property and to freedom from violence and discrimination. The issue will include case studies on the activism undergirding the passage of particularly powerful legal activism, analyses of feminist legal activisms, and debate on the connections between legally-focussed work and work which focuses on different zones of change. The co-editors of the issue will be Jane Bennett and Sylvia Tamale.

Pieces for consideration (articles, profiles, book reviews, proposals for 'In Conversations') should be sent to jane.bennett@uct.ac.za by the end of March 2011.

Feminist Africa 16

The theme for *Feminist Africa* 16 will be on African feminist engagement with creative writing, and the politics of popular and literary textual representation. The co-editors of the issue will be Amina Mama and Yaba Badoe, and the issue will seek to explore the trajectories of African feminist writing of fiction, poetry, and drama in multiple contexts and forms, the politics of audience and resources, and the achievements of literary representation on the continent in the past two decades.

Enquiries about the issue and pieces for consideration (articles, profiles, book reviews, proposals for 'In Conversations') should be sent to jane. bennett@uct.ac.za and amama@mills.edu by the end of May 2011.

Feminist Africa **17**

The theme for *Feminist Africa* 17 will be on feminist politics and practices of IC Technologies, and will be co-edited by Jennifer Radloff and Jan Moolman. The issue will explore the meaning of political activism which draws upon the multiple options of ICTs for communication and networking, and offer analysis of the implications of the "technological revolution" for African and transnational feminist work and thought.

Enquiries about the issue and pieces for consideration (articles, profiles, book reviews, proposals for 'In Conversations') should be sent to jane.bennett@uct.ac.za by the end of June, 2011.