ress all forms of
and girls. Common forms
ence continue to exist behind a veil of silence
resulting in the loss of women's lives at the hands of those who
profess to love them. For every form of violence mentioned in
this book, many others exist in diverse cultural and traditional
contexts across the world.

By not including women's activism and forms of resistance,
this chapter runs the risk of presenting women's life experiences
as a mass of doom and apathy. This is not the case. Women have
resisted violence and oppression in many different forums and
have achieved victories in international development policies,
national legislative reforms, the increased representation of
women in decision-making structures and a proliferation of
gender and women's studies in institutions of learning. The most
important victory is the impact of grassroots women's activism
without which international declarations and conventions are not
possible. Many hard-won victories have been gained through
decades of fighting, lobbying, marches, legislation and policy
change. If they are not sustained through vigilance and clarity
of purpose, as we saw in the Zuma rape trial, women's rights can
easily be lost to the wind.

War on sexual terror: a woman's body as a site for battle

'Even tonight and I need to take a walk and clear
my head about this poem about why I can't
go out without changing my clothes my shoes
my body posture my gender identity my age
my status as a woman alone in the evening/
alone on the streets/alone not being the point/
the point being that I can't do what I want
to do with my own body because I am the wrong
sex the wrong age the wrong skin….
…who the hell set things up
like this
and in France they say if the guy penetrates
but does not ejaculate then he did not rape me
and if after stabbing him if after screams if
after begging the bastard and if even after smashing
a hammer to his head if even after that if he
and his buddies fuck me after that
then I consented and there was
no rape because finally you understand finally
they fucked me over because I was wrong I was
wrong again to be who I am

which is exactly like South Africa penetrating into Namibia penetrating into Angola and does that mean I mean how do you know if Pretoria ejaculates what will the evidence look like'[1]

Imagine that the hand throwing a US pellet bomb stopped for a moment before discharging hundreds of fragments over a small town in Afghanistan to check if the children at the local school were safe. Even better, imagine racist South Africa invading Botswana, penetrating ANC camps with a cocked machine gun but seconds before ejaculating a spray of bullets stopping to ask the question: is it okay if I ejaculate into you?

The poem above entitled 'Poem about My Rights' by June Jordan was once popular amongst many of us who fought the war against gender violence during the period leading up to the first democratic elections in South Africa. For us, it was important that we did not narrowly define rape as the penetration of an individual woman's vagina, but expand the definition to include broader and systematic violence against people and nations across the world. Shell-shocked by the reports and images coming out of Jacob Zuma's rape trial, I revisited the poem after more than ten years only to find shocking parallels between some aspects of the trial and the socio-political turbulence in broader society.

In this instance, the consequences of one African elder's inability to think rationally in one of the most critical moments of his entire life are purported to be part of a political plot to stop him from being the next president of the country. It is ironic that as a human race we remain tragically transfixed by the notion of men ruling political, religious and economic empires yet remain unperturbed by their inability to resist a woman's body enticingly wrapped in a kanga or thong.

'How do you walk around barely clothed in the house of a man imbued with feelings? Any man with a

functional penis would have reacted the way Zuma did.'[2]

According to Busisiwe Mzala, a woman who travelled all the way from Herschel in the Eastern Cape for the trial, the only thing we need to worry about is the erectile power of the penis and not the rational power of the mind. Is it any wonder that we are fascinated by men's power to control global empires while we remain unmoved by their inability to control their penile erections? Does this explain why we are living on edge expecting to be wiped out by erect weapons of mass destruction poised at the point of no return with no option but to ejaculate?

Military aggression and invasion, inter-tribal and religious conflicts and other conflicts generated by competition for power or resources have become a reality of modern life. These wars affect the lives of innumerable men, women and children. For women and girls, however, trauma and death come in many other forms. Many are targeted for rape and other forms of sexual abuse. In addition to being attacked by strangers, women are killed in their homes and communities.

Guns, women and roses

Millions of people all over the world are subjected to violence in public and private spheres every day, with guns being the most common weapon. From civil war in Mogadishu to taxi violence in Soweto, gangs in Los Angeles and Mitchell's Plain, guns have become common instruments of death. Fuelled by the current 'war on terror', the arms industry is booming. All this occurs within a climate of weak gun control, particularly in poor countries.

The amount of money spent on arms is said to total an average of US$22 billion a year for countries in Africa, Asia, the Middle East and Latin America. According to an Amnesty International report, this amount would place those same countries on track

to meet their UN Millennium Development Goals for achieving universal primary education (approximately $10 billion per year) and for reducing infant and maternal mortality rates (estimated at costing approximately $12 billion a year).[3] Furthermore, Amnesty International reveals that permanent members of the UN Security Council (China, France, the Russian Federation, the UK and United States) benefit from this spending as they are the top five arms exporters in the world. Together these countries are responsible for the sale of 88% of conventional arms, with the United States dominating the industry by contributing almost half of all the world's exported weapons.[4]

Overall, it is estimated that there are nearly 650 million small arms in the world today, 60% of them in the hands of private individuals who are mostly men. Similarly, the vast majority of companies that manufacture, sell and buy arms are owned by men.[5] The question then arises: what does this mean for women's safety in a world that has no regard for women's lives?

Less than a month after the death of former Yugoslav president Slobodan Milosevic and on the same day that former Liberian president Charles Taylor appeared in court for his crimes against humanity during the civil war in Sierra Leone, we woke up to an image of a boy toting a toy gun marching amongst adult males at Jacob Zuma's trial. The sight of this boy shouting slogans evokes painful memories of child soldiers in Africa. In her book *Child Soldier*, China Keitetsi gives a harrowing account of a child's journey from family to bloody warfare. The story begins in Uganda in the seventies when she, then eight years old, was drafted into the National Resistance Army fighting to depose Milton Obote. She eventually fled to Johannesburg where she was forced to temporarily inhabit the Hillbrow underworld before relocating to Denmark.[6]

Keitetsi's story is one of many of Africa's children. According to the Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, Africa has the highest number of child soldiers. In Peru, El Salvador, Nepal

and Uganda, over 20% of child soldiers are girls.[7] Many of these girls are forced into sexual slavery. A Ugandan girl soldier reported:

> *'The rebel commander ordered the soldiers to come and choose among the girls to become their wives. We all lined up, and a man came to me and raped me over and over again. I had to remain with him every night for the two months I was in captivity.'*[8]

Reports from across Africa show how difficult it is to integrate child soldiers back into civilian life once they are freed. According to Madeleine Yila Bompoto, co-ordinator for Integrating Child Soldiers in Congo, over 5 000 children are involved in the family reunification project overseen by UNICEF and the Congolese Ministry of Social Affairs. Many of them are reported to have been orphaned as a result of the war. A similar project in Sudan involves taking children out of the army, enrolling them in schools or setting up camps for them. However, because of limited resources, many children end up fleeing overpopulated camps to live in forests or in the streets. Some return to the army.[9]

The sight of the gun-toting boy celebrating aggressive and violent expressions of manhood was also a reminder of the fact that South Africa is one of the countries in the world with high levels of firearm ownership (licensed and unlicensed). Research has shown that a woman's chance of being killed by her husband or boyfriend increases fivefold if he has access to a gun.[10]

The lethal nature and severity of injuries caused by guns in homes are dramatically demonstrated by gruesome reports of femicide in the media. One such report stands out:

> *'Elizabeth Mhlongo of South Africa was shot dead in her bedroom in 1999, along with her five-year-*

old daughter Tlaleng. Her husband Solomon, a legal gun owner, emptied a magazine of bullets into the two victims, stopped to reload and then continued firing until the gun jammed. Elizabeth was left sprawled at the side of the bed, her chest, head, thigh and hand peppered with bullets, while Tlaleng lay slumped sideways in a blood-spattered chair.' [11]

Not only are women at risk of being shot by their civilian partners, those married to law enforcement officers such as the police, military personnel and other security officials are at greater risk. Just a day after the image of the gun-toting boy appeared, Superintendent Mateane stationed at Kagiso Police Station stormed into his girlfriend's home and killed her and several other people, including two women, a one-year-old boy and four senior police officers.[12]

Described by the local mayor as a 'very nice gentleman', Superintendent Mateane was driven to murder by an uncontrollable fit of jealousy and rage sparked by feeling rejected by his girlfriend. Very often, men's obsession to own women as their possessions drives them to kill in the belief that 'if I can't have you, no-one will' or 'I don't mind going to jail for you'. If a man lives in a macho and violent society with easy access to guns, murder can never be too far from the mind of a 'nice gentleman'.

If there is one thing that has been constant during Jacob Zuma's rape trial, it is the images and language of gun warfare (*kuzoliwa*) reinforced by a periodic rendition of what seemed to be a court anthem, *Umshini wam*. As a freedom song, *Umshini wam* was an appropriate and powerful expression of defiance in the face of an enemy who opted to use violence and war to enforce its repressive policies. However, if the song is sung at a rape trial by one of the commanders who fought for freedom in a country governed by people with whom he fought the war, it

sends an irresponsible message to a young democracy that is still struggling with issues of racial and gender reintegration, gun control and violent crime including atrocious incidents of sexual assault of women and children.

Singing the song at a rape trial raises questions about the association of a gun with a penis. This association is a product of the warrior culture that has been part of society for centuries. In a book titled *An Unpopular War*, author JH Thompson describes white South African men's experiences of national service through interviews with former members of the South African Defence Force. In one case, an interview reveals the fusion of a gun with a penis.

'They had this little saying when you got issued with your rifle: "This is my rifle" (shaking the rifle) –"this is my gun" (and they pointed at their crotch) –"this is for shooting" (shaking the rifle) –"and this is for fun" (pointing at their crotch again).' [13]

In another book, *Fire in the Belly*, Sam Keen argues that in warrior culture, a men's penis and his weapon become fused. According to Keen, the penis first became a sword and then a gun and a warrior's demonstration of his power.[14] Keen states that the Hebrew word for penis and weapon is the same, *za'in*.

The association of a penis with a gun in relation to Jacob Zuma's rape trial was articulated by Njabulo Ndebele in an article that questioned Zuma's capacity for self-mastery, a trait Ndebele argues is vital for anyone aspiring to high office. Of critical importance, however, is the association made by Ndebele between the AK-47 and what he termed the 'invasive penis'. Ndebele argues that the *Umshini wam* song rekindles memories of women and girls who are raped in this country.[15]

When he challenged phallocentric notions of masculinity, Ndebele came under attack from some men for being a traitor to

the male species. In his response to Ndebele, David Masondo, national chairman of the Young Communist League, labelled Ndebele's analysis as an insult not only to Zuma but to those who asked him to sing the song. How does this response differ from defending Eugene Terreblanche's recital of a poem that affirms *die volk* at a trial where he was accused of assaulting a black man, on the ground that some members of *die volk* asked him to recite the poem?

Masondo asserted that Ndebele's analysis vulgarised the song and took it out of the context of a smear campaign.[16] Never in his response did Masondo bother to analyse the song within the context of a rape trial taking place in a sexist culture in a society where extramarital sex for husbands is tolerated despite the epidemic prevalence of HIV/Aids. Rather than putting the song within the context of widespread violence in a society that is still divided along racial, class and gender lines, Masondo chose to limit his analysis to one case only, that of Jacob Zuma who, according to him, is a victim of a political conspiracy plot. In no way could Masondo, as a young black communist, envision an anti-rape movement that also calls for a critical and incisive review of capitalism and patriarchy in the new South Africa. After all, both are deadly for black men and women.

However, while it is true that a poor woman's situation is bound to that of her exploited male counterpart, it is important that we do not lose sight of the particular exploitation that women face on a daily basis. Under the current economic system, an average black male worker is condemned to a life of poverty. His wife, however, is condemned not only to a life of economic exploitation but is also faced with the systematic practice of gender oppression perpetrated by her exploited husband.

In his book *Women's Liberation and the African Struggle*, Thomas Sankara, the revolutionary President of Burkina Faso who was assassinated in the course of a counter-revolutionary

military coup in 1987, argued that the existence of privilege for a man spells danger for the woman.

> *'The male uses the complex nature of these relations as an excuse to sow confusion among women. He takes advantage of all the shrewdness that class exploitation has to offer in order to maintain his domination over women. This is the same method used by men to dominate other men in other lands. The idea was established that certain men, by virtue of their family of origin and birth, or by divine right, were superior to others. This was the basis for the feudal system. Other men have managed to enslave whole peoples in this way. They used their origins, or arguments based on their skin color, as a supposedly scientific justification for dominating those who were unfortunate enough to have skin of a different color. This is what colonial domination and apartheid are based on.'* [17]

Sankara called on progressive men to pay close attention to women's situations because they push Africans to wage a sex war when what they need is a war against poverty and economic exploitation. The fact that the Congress of South African Trade Unions and the South African Communist Party are divided over Zuma's rape trial remains a serious matter for poor black women and men in South Africa.

Rape as a weapon of war

Historically, the extent and nature of violence against women in the context of militarisation were largely ignored as a result of women's exclusion from efforts to develop a global rule of law. For example, out of over 240 representatives to the Diplomatic Conference that adopted the Geneva Convention, only 13 were women.[18] This means that the impact of war, conflict and