

especially black women, to fight against racial discrimination and to confront the violence and sexual harassment they receive from all men, black and white.

Queen Latifah attempts to negate many of the female stereotypes such as the patriarchal view of sex mainly for purposes of men's pleasure, and also links women to divinity. There are many other women artists who opt to counter the sexist and violent content of rap. Even though some do not belong to the rap genre, women like Tracy Chapman, Jill Scott, Erykah Badu, Lauryn Hill and India Arie come to mind. Locally, women such as Miriam Makeba and Busi Mhlongo, and the younger generation including Zolani Mahola, Thandiswa Mazwai and Simphiwe Dana, present an image that inspires pride in who you are as an African woman – irrespective of body size and shape.

#### **If not a bitch, then a witch**

Widespread subjugation of women corresponds with their appropriation as sexual objects irrespective of whether the woman is a singer, writer, model, politician, lawyer or religious leader. This is a reflection of the fact that women are generally not respected at all. Why else would so many of women's personal boundaries and their rights be violated? Why is it okay to call someone a bitch but offensive to refer to another as a kaffir? What would happen if supporters (black and white) of the complainant in the Zuma rape trial carried placards outside the court building carrying the messages: Kick the Dog, Shoot the Kaffir, Kill the Wizard?

Somehow, it is acceptable to use derogatory names and labels such as motherfucker, witch, bitch and many others to refer to women. Even the ANC Youth League leader Fikile Mbalula is reported to have perfected his provocative sexist art by chanting slogans such as 'kill the witches'.<sup>36</sup> Mbalula's call to kill the witches is a reminder of the global witch hunt and murder of

women that started in central Europe in the 14<sup>th</sup> century. Fuelled by the state and the church, female power became synonymous with evil and women were arbitrarily burned or hanged. Publications such as *The Hammer of Witches* published by Catholic Inquisition authorities in 1485 and 1486 planted the seed of deep-seated and deranged global misogyny.

*'What else is a woman but a foe to friendship, an unescapable punishment, a necessary evil, a natural temptation, a desirable calamity, an evil nature, painted with fine colours... Women are by nature instruments of Satan – they are carnal, a structural defect rooted in the original creation.'*<sup>37</sup>

A review of *Caliban and the Witch: Women, the Body and Primitive Accumulation* by Silvia Federici frames witch hunts as a strategy used by the Catholic Church (supported by nation states) to maintain law and order in times of social upheaval and change.<sup>38</sup> In this way, the church and the state tried to quell revolts by commoners and to control women's reproduction to ensure that sufficient pairs of hands would be produced to service future capitalist needs. Federici further argues that the church used witch hunts to terrorise independent women thinkers and rebellious colonial and slave subjects. Federici states that by representing women as witches or evil forces, working-class resistance to capitalist exploitation was divided and weakened.

As in Europe, witch-hunting in South Africa is a reflection of unstable socio-economic conditions and explosive political pressures. This explains why it reached its peak during the early 1990s when Nelson Mandela and other long-term political prisoners were released from prison. The situation continued into the new dispensation and it prompted the premier of the Northern Province, Ngoako Ramathodi, to appoint a commission of inquiry into witchcraft violence and ritual murders in 1995.

The Ralushai Commission found that even though men were also victims of witchcraft burning, the majority of victims were women.<sup>39</sup> Similarly, research carried out by the Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice in Ghana in 1998 found that over a thousand women and only 13 men were housed in witch refuges in northern Ghana.<sup>40</sup>

This gender dynamic is, according to Yaba Badoe, a scapegoat refuges in Ghana. Badoe asserts that she undertook in witch as free agents operating independently of male protection and control are often accused of being witches.<sup>41</sup> An economically and sexually independent woman, she argues, causes tremendous unease within the community in which she lives.

In South Africa it was not only witches who were burned to death in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Any man or woman accused of being an informer was attacked. Being accused of being a witch in a patriarchal and repressive society is as dangerous as being accused of being an informer in a politically charged and unstable environment. The time and money that was wasted on proving that Bulelami Ngcuka was not a spy is a classic example of how serious and life-threatening such accusations can be. The penalty for transgressing the attitudes and beliefs of the dominant political or gender regime is dangerous.

It is clear that in patriarchal society sources of negative energy are associated with women. This is well illustrated by the names and labels used to describe women. These labels are linked either to the devil or describe the reproductive or sexual role that women should play in relation to men. In my work with young people, we examine names and labels that are used to describe women compared to men in various languages (including *tsotsi taal* or *scanto*). I dare everyone to do the same exercise and analyse the origins and meaning behind such names.

One sunny Saturday morning I was driving through Soshanguve when I came to a four-way stop, facing a woman

driver on the opposite side. A taxi approached from the left and should have waited for the woman to proceed as she had right of way. When she moved forward, the taxi driver stopped and shouted insulting names that referred to her body parts. Instead of stopping at the intersection, opened the window and shouted insulting names that referred to her body parts. A group of women with their young children – boys and girls – were watching and listening at a nearby bus stop. What kind of example does this set for young men?

In an SAP/M interview during the Zuma rape trial, a Zulu-speaking journalist said to his white colleagues, 'You should be glad you do not understand Zulu'. He said this in reaction to Zuma's supporters' never-ending chant of unprintable names referring to a woman and her mother's sexual body parts. Somehow, any woman who has given birth to a child can be called names by people that she will never meet in her lifetime. If you don't believe me, ask Zinedine Zidane's mother. Stuart Jeffries wrote in *The Guardian* that Marco Materazzi might have insulted Zinedine Zidane's mother during the World Cup. That, he argues, might seem as justification for the infamous head-butt. Why is it, Jeffries asks, that the worst insults in the world are always about your mother?<sup>42</sup>

As a woman of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, however, I choose not to throw up my arms in desperation asking the question: *Baba, senzemi na?* (What have we done?) Instead, I choose to raise my arms in gratitude ready to receive divine feminine and feminist opportunities ushered in by the era of the moment: the time for a woman. More specifically, the time for African women has finally come. Those who still choose to wallow in a dream world and an illusion of their racial, gender and geographical superiority will catch up in their next lifetime.