

‘Women ask for it’: from kangaroo court to kanga court

‘This mama is speaking lies because she was in Zuma’s room with that (kanga) on and he could see everything. After that Zuma slept with this mama and then she put the case against him. Zuma will win the case because this mama is speaking lies and all the people know it’s wrong. She’s got too much money and she didn’t really work, where’s this money coming from? This woman is an isigebengu (criminal), she is Zuma’s girlfriend, otherwise why would she sleep with him without a condom.’

Sthembile Ndwandwe, single mother from Lamontville¹

Any South African who survived the country when it was on fire during the seventies and eighties will tell you stories about seeing people burned beyond recognition by mobs chanting slogans.

During this dark and horrible time in our country, anyone convicted of being a traitor by a kangaroo court was sentenced to a life of burning in hell. Even old men had to answer to boys presiding over kangaroo courts for offences such as not sleeping with their wives.

Many years after that period, South Africa came to witness a re-enactment of the kangaroo court mentality when people converged outside the High Court during Zuma's rape trial chanting slogans reminiscent of 'kill the witch, burn the traitor'. The man defending himself in the dock was not a traitor, people but a champion of the liberation struggle. This man with his impeccable credentials was in the dock not for blowing up racist military installations but was defending himself against rape charges.

Burning *impepho* (incense used by healers in cleansing ceremonies) and singing songs calling for the complainant's flesh and blood, the mob outside the court perceived the rape charge as an attack on their hero and resorted to a means of dialogue in which South Africans are well trained – sloganeering, intimidation, harassment and a blatant display of disobedience for anything or anyone perceived as authority. Later on, even old man Desmond Tutu was called to account for his sexual history by boys who are politically wet behind their ears and who seem to equate disrespect for their elders with freedom of expression. To them, a call for discipline (including self-discipline) as a critical means for decolonising the mind of Africans is dismissed as autocratic leadership.

Ironically, blaming and despising the complainant outside the court buildings was a reflection of the deliberations inside and the court itself. Zuma's advocate, the learned Kemp J. Kemp, and the supporters blowing their *vuvuzelas* outside had one thing in common: they accused the complainant of inviting sex by wearing a kanga. In my view, Kemp's graphic interrogation of the complainant's past experiences of sexual intercourse carried

the same message as a group of women burning panties outside the court.

The prevailing tendency to blame the oppressed for the consequences of their oppression is commonplace. It is the same attitude that blames a farm worker for bad body odour despite the fact that he not only works for a pittance but is housed with his family in a place that does not have running water and is situated miles away from the farm where he sweats for a living. For a woman accusing a man of rape, the same principle applies – she is blamed for something beyond her control.

From the moment she lays a charge of rape, her state of mind is in question. In his statement, Judge Willem van der Merwe said he allowed evidence to be led about the complainant's past sexual history because he wanted to explore evidence related to the complainant's mindset regarding the alleged political conspiracy plot Zuma's mindset regarding the alleged political conspiracy plot against him was never questioned.

It is hard enough for any individual to blow the whistle on fraud, corruption or any other criminal activity committed by those in power. However, a woman who chooses to blow a whistle of any sort, including laying a charge of rape against the Deputy President, has to be a woman of steel. This view is confirmed by Ama Ata Aidoo, who argues that a woman who takes action against her male comrades might hit a concrete wall with such force that she can never recover her original self.³

Blaming the woman is embedded in a specific patriarchal discourse that views women not only as inferior, but as evil and dangerous and a menace to society. Societal responses to sexual violence are influenced by myths, beliefs and stereotypes that emanate from such thinking.

Confronting myths about rape

People Opposing Woman Abuse (POWA) defines a myth as a commonly held belief or explanation of an event or phenomenon

culture. Institutions of power suppress voices of dissent by labelling people who challenge the status quo as mad, unstable, irrational or unbalanced. Because we all want to be perceived as balanced and 'rational' we may be afraid of voicing opinions that are contrary to popular belief or practice. Women living in a men's world become preoccupied with being logical to the point of suppressing alternative views. This, combined with women's low self-esteem and pressure to excel 'like men', makes having an alternative view or challenging patriarchy deeply distressing. In this instance, the woman's report of a sexual violation was seen as a personal pathology and used to exonerate the male oppressor. This is a key tactic of patriarchy and it is found in all sectors of society. It is meant to ensure that women remain silent and frozen. This fear is a necessary condition for the maintenance of male power over women.

Transforming oppression into an illness and the suppression of women's legitimate anger against gender violence is illustrated in an interview the complainant gave after Judge Van der Merwe pronounced his verdict:

'I haven't spoken out before because I did not want to be part of the game I saw happening through the media. I see myself being described and defined by others, the media, the defence, the judge. I have heard the things said by members of various structures and parties. I see analysis and judgments from all sides....'

Now I am angry and ready to speak. It is an anger with direction. I am ready to use it to take on the huge battle we have in our society when it comes to how women are viewed and treated and the kind of roles men play to keep women in these positions.

I am not mad. I am not incapable of understanding the difference between consensual and non-consensual sex. The fact that I have been raped multiple times

*does not make me mad. It means there is something very wrong with our world and our society.'*¹⁷

2. Women ask for rape by the way they dress
Control of women's clothing is essentially in the hands of men. Fashion designers to priests and traditionalists, men decide from fashion should appear in public and in private. The politics of dress has less to do with what women want to wear and more to do with what men would like women to believe is right for them.

A conflict exists between contemporary fashion designers who are hell-bent on creating modern clothing that reveals a woman's 'sexy' body for men's pleasure, while religious and cultural rules oppose a woman's 'pure' body being revealed so that they can neutralise her potential for seducing a man. Women's choices of clothing, like many other factors in life, are influenced by socio-cultural, religious and political mores and the current global socio-economic order. Most of the women on the catwalks and red carpets of Milan, Paris, London and New York are dressed by male fashion designers.

Dress is also used to construct and express national identity and respect for African culture. A kanga with the smiling face of Robert Mugabe or King Mswati around a woman's curves, or semi-nude participation in the reed dance in Swaziland and KwaZulu-Natal, sets the trend. In other cases dress is used to indicate that the wearer belongs to a certain religion. Women may wear veils, long dresses or head wraps.

It doesn't seem to matter what type of clothing women wear, they are all equally susceptible to being raped. Rape is a premeditated crime; it can happen to any girl or woman irrespective of whether she is in a nappy, fully covered on her way from collecting her pension, wearing an elegant suit working late at night in her office, dancing semi-nude in a nightclub or fully clothed taking care of her children at home. Controlling women's

clothing does not have the goal of reducing rape because it does not require men to take responsibility for their sexual decisions and actions.

In the case of Zuma rape trial, the myths related to a woman's dress included comments about the complainant wearing a skirt and not pants, and later changing into a kanga. The myth of the miniskirt has been addressed in gender circles and in the media. One such article was by Justice Malala, who eloquently wrote in the *Sunday Times* about his encounter with a miniskirt when he was 17.⁸ However, Malala's encounter with a miniskirt was not in person but in the form of an educational pamphlet highlighting black women's triple oppression as woman, black person and worker. Malala recounts that during those days a man accused of rape stood a chance of being acquitted if he alleged that the woman was dressed in a provocative manner. According to cultural beliefs and the law (which always seem to work together when it comes to controlling women's sexuality), a woman wearing a miniskirt is asking for rape.

Aside from being put on trial because of wearing a skirt, the complainant in the Zuma trial was also accused of wearing a kanga. Both are reported to have sent a sexual message to the Deputy President, who, being the law-abiding citizen he is, took it upon himself to act accordingly.

A kanga is a rectangular piece of cotton cloth that originated in East Africa. The original design was called *leso*, after the handkerchief squares that inspired its creation. Later on, its buyers (mainly men who bought it as a gift for their wives) named the cloth *kanga* after the noisy and sociable guinea-fowl known for its elegant, spotty plumage.⁹ Kanga designs evolved from the spotty design to a variety of bold designs and bright colours.

Later on in their evolution, Swahili proverbs were printed on kangas. The kanga became a useful communication tool. It is not clear whether the kanga the complainant wore on the night of the alleged rape had any clear sexual proverb written on it or

whether the sexual message was a figment of Zuma's creative imagination.

A kanga is the width of an adult's outstretched arms and wide enough to cover an adult woman's body from above her breasts to below the knee. It is neither short nor tight and is designed to flow around a woman's contours. In addition to being used as a wrap for women's bodies, kangas have multiple functions including carrying babies, covering tables and decorating walls. Men are also reported to sleep in them and wear them around the house as wraps.¹⁰

Kangas also have political uses; they are in some parts of Africa what the T-shirt is to political campaigns in South Africa. While T-shirts are worn by both men and women, kangas are mostly worn by women. You will often see female political supporters wearing kangas emblazoned with their candidate's face dancing at political rallies.

In South Africa, the kanga has not become a popular tool for political campaigning. This might not be a bad idea for the Zuma camp to explore, given that a poll conducted by the *Sowetan* newspaper to determine support for Zuma becoming the country's next president revealed that he had more support amongst men than amongst women.¹¹ Should Zuma choose to adopt the kanga as a tool for political campaigning, I would recommend the Swahili message *msilale manawake* (women don't sleep).

3. Women as property in African culture

Contemporary interpretations of African culture seem to equate women with cows or land that a man owns. She is accorded little or no respect and is perceived to be of lesser value. Her role in the world is limited to catering to men's basic human needs, including giving birth to children (preferably male) as a means of contributing to the multiplication and survival of the race.

What is a woman? What role does a woman play in African

society and what is the nature of her relationship with an African man? On 9 August 2005 (South African Women's Day), a group of women (myself included) gathered in a round thatched mud hut along the banks of the Hennops River to listen to uBaba Credo Vusamazulu Mutwa speak about what it means to be a woman in African society.

Mutwa started by paying tribute to African goddesses, queens and warrior women across Africa and in the Diaspora. His point of departure was to thank the goddess Nomkhulwane, whom he regards as the first god – 'the one who unfolded creation, whom I saluted the cat queen, Manthatisa, and Queen Nzinga of Angola who fought against the Portuguese for 47 years and was never defeated. As she lay on her deathbed at an advanced age, she put her spear next to her and remarked that she had only been conquered by the greatest enemy – death.

Still paying tribute to women, Mutwa called on the spirit of Nandi who was instrumental in planning Shaka's military operations in minute detail. This included ensuring that there was food and medicine during the war. After Nandi's death, Mutwa reports, Shaka never won another battle. Mutwa's tribute to African women living in Africa moved beyond her borders to connect with the spirits of those who also invoke spirits of black gods in the distant hills of Asia, the Americas and New Zealand.

According to Mutwa, a woman is a great being. She is directly connected to the Moon. The connection between women and the Moon, Mutwa asserts, explains why women who live together or who are connected to each other spiritually often menstruate at the same time. Women are governed by deep spiritual powers of the universe. It is interesting that oral history and written texts about the rise of African religion and spirituality exclude the role that women have played and are playing in this arena.

Mutwa's views about the key and central role that women played in African spirituality are highlighted in a conversation between Desiree Lewis and Molaro Ogunديpe, a leading feminist

author, poet and activist teaching and writing about African cultural and gender studies. Because of their connectedness to the author, Ogunديpe argues that in traditional societies, women were gods, Ogunديpe argues that in traditional societies, women were goddesses, Ogunديpe argues that in traditional societies, women were goddesses for indigenous knowledge. For instance, the Yoruba Ifa archives for indigenous knowledge.¹² Almost every male archivist system with its history and mythology acknowledged a divination system with its female principle.¹³ Almost every male woman and the divine female argues, had to be backed by a priest of Ifa, Ogunديpe further argues, who served as his powerful female who upholds the world', who served as his reference and resource person. Ogunديpe asserts that the word 'woman' is sometimes translated as 'witch' in Yoruba everyday speech. In a sense, a witch is a woman who possesses indigenous knowledge and mysterious powers.¹⁴ Indeed, closer to home, we all know of Queen Modjadji who possessed scientific rainmaking knowledge.

Because she comes from and treads in the footprints of the divine female principle, a woman is a guardian of truth. This explains why people swear by their mother when they give evidence (*ubujakazi*). As descendants of priestesses, women are custodians of deep secret knowledge. Their role includes, amongst other things, imparting compassionate teachings of the deep knowledge to their families.

In their role as custodians of great knowledge, women are supported by men, in particular the uncles of their children. An uncle (*umalume*), Mutwa explains, does not have to be related by blood lineage. Any mature and responsible man within a clan can be assigned the role of passing on sacred knowledge to boys. This includes sex education, which, in African culture, is not separated from the broader teachings of morality, justice and caring for oneself and others – *motho ke motho ka batho* (I am because you are). If children learn sacred knowledge from a caring and compassionate teacher who is one of their own, they tend to see the knowledge as part of their heritage and are careful not to abuse this knowledge.

Metaphorically, sex education is presented as crossing a deep and wide river. The focus is not only on learning to swim so that you don't drown but on how to become one with the river. Water is a source of life, an element used for cleansing, purifying and unifying. However, like any other element (fire, earth, air) water can give life, and it can take life. Using a river as a symbol in sex education relates to the ambivalent symbol of life and death, creation and destruction, as well as the opposites between feminine and masculine.

In my studies of sex education from elders in rural parts of South Africa, I have also learnt about a woman's body as an entity that is composed of oceans. This is expressed by the saying *mmele wa mme o na le mawailé*. These oceans encompass female ejaculate, menstrual blood, amniotic fluid and breast milk. These oceans symbolise the creation of life.

In his address, Mutwa expressed regret that currently our children receive sacred knowledge from strangers using strange mediums such as television. As a result, such knowledge is mere information. It is not part of sacred knowledge.

Some of the ancient teachings, according to Mutwa, are based on the following principles:

- Respect a woman. All women are your mother.
- Respect a child – *umkhonto ka Somandla* (children are a spear of God that landed on Earth).
- Respect your brother, he is of one spirit.
- Create peace and love in communion with others.

According to Mutwa, it was women who recognised plants as food and medicine. They also invented bags to carry grain – *umfazi u faza imbepu*. This means that women contribute to the process of enhancing rather than taking away life. Mutwa reports that African women were amongst those who bought farms in the Transvaal in the 1930s. Even though many were poor as a result of apartheid, they had ideas and created saving

schemes such as *umathelisana*, which infuses the principle of *ubuntu* into economic empowerment strategies.

Mutwa also argued that a man is the head of the household but the woman is the heart. Both the head and the heart have to work together to create harmony and balance. Both are necessary for life and living; if one dies, there's no life. Responding to the high level of violence against women in our communities, Mutwa explained that in Zulu rape is referred to as *ukudlengula*, which means 'to tear apart'. Every time a man rapes a woman, he not only rips her body and soul apart, he also cuts the connection of a people to the Spirit. In the same way, Sotho phrases that Spirit is suppressed and buried, which makes it impossible for the Spirit to breathe life into our collective soul.

Mutwa's views on rape are supported by another elder, Drake Kgalushi Koka, who led the first men's march against rape in Alexandra Township that was organised by ADAPT in May 1997.

*'We can never build our country with violence. We can never build our country with car hijackings. We can never build our country with rape. There has been enough bloodshed in this country. As African people, we will not go against the teachings of our ancestors. We will respect our mothers, our sisters, and bless our daughters.'*¹⁴

Speaking of love and marriage, Mutwa emphasised that love is like a plant, it needs to be nurtured or it will die. One way of making sure that love stays alive, he said, is to make your wife your best friend. As best friends, man and woman evolve together and separately, and are bound by love. In describing his marriage to Cecilia, his late wife, Mutwa said that as a healer, he could not view his wife as a sexual object. Rather, he committed

to a marriage of intellect and artistic creativity. Mutwa urges men to be secure enough to free their wives to fly like falcons, without feeling jealous. A bird that is free always flies back to the warmth and comfort of its nest.

The lessons learnt on that Women's Day confirmed that African women are no-one's property. Rather, they are special creations and custodians of truth, love, peace and deep spiritual knowledge. Through her, the rest of the family and community are connected to the Spirit – *umfazi umavula indlela*. After hearing Mutwa's address I realised that African women have no idea of how beautiful, intelligent, resourceful and deeply connected they are with the Great One. Foreign culture and religion have cut African women's connection with God.

Sacred knowledge is slowly being resurrected in different sectors and there is a call for African women to re-think their responses to societal crises. Jovial Rantao was right to be shocked about the number of Zuma's female supporters who chanted profanities outside the court building.

'You had to have been on this cobbled Johannesburg pavement and looked at the expressions on their faces and into their eyes. Then you would have experienced the emotion, hatred and commitment to their cause – horrible as it may sound. When you listen to their voices, and the insults spluttering out of their mouths at breakneck speed hit home, their true meaning would leave you feeling sick and angry.'

*The young woman they called "bitch" is a human being. She is someone's daughter, someone's friend, someone's relative and, most of all, she should be a fellow human being to those who have displayed such forceful hatred.'*¹⁵

Rantao's last statement couldn't be further from the truth. What is it that this woman has done to make other women act in a manner that is so insulting to womanhood? What is it that she has done that makes women resort to fire (a masculine element) to bring a manner that makes women resort to fire (a feminine element) to bring when they could have used water (a feminine element) to bring balance to a crisis that it was Adriaan Vlok who used the

It is interesting that it was Adriaan Vlok who used the symbolism of water by washing Frank Chikane's feet as a way of asking for healing, forgiveness and reconciliation. Symbolically water, or the feminine principle, is a key element on the cosmological wheel. According to some people, water is critical for cooling the raging fires to bring stability and re-orient cosmic energies with community and continuity.¹⁶ Drought, as we all know, has the potential to kill all living organisms. A spiritual drought also kills. However, the effects of spiritual death manifest in subtle and invisible ways.

In African religions, people are healed by drinking water mixed with *semasho* – ash. *Semasho* is not an ordinary ash; it is prepared in a fire ritual. In his book *The Healing Wisdom of Africa*, Malidoma Somé describes fire as a force that makes us do, see, feel, love and hate.¹⁷ It has the power to make us feel intense compassion or intense hate. Positive fire, he argues, emerges in the form of visions, dreams and intimacy with the ancestors, while negative fire presents itself in the form of speed, restlessness, the radical consumption common in modern society, and physical and spiritual death. Somé goes on to say that the fiery temperament of contemporary society is a result of being misaligned with fire. The fire is raging out of control and we are experiencing war and conflict across the world, pursuit of material goods and a lack of respect for life. *Semasho* is prepared in a ritual of using fire that is meant to reconnect with the ancestors. In the ritual, herbs are burned. Herbs represent plants and the life that comes from the Earth. Earth rituals heal people's sense of belonging, self-worth and community.

*'Our womb is the earth; it is our place of origination. Feelings of absence, of being out of touch, any form of alienation, anonymity and purposelessness - all are symptomatic of a disconnection with the earth. No other element can heal the hollow psyche in search of fulfillment...'*¹⁸

When mixed with water, *semasho* encompasses the elements of earth, fire, air and water. My first experience of participating in a fire ritual of preparing *semasho* shattered my Western comfort zones. Wearing a silk skirt, I spent a day in the scorching sun around the fire with my healer aunt collecting wood and burning herbs and medicinal plants.

My silk skirt snagged on one thorny bush after another. By the end of the day, I was tired, hot and tight-lipped, my hands bleeding and burning from being pricked by thorns whilst my aunt continued to sing peacefully throughout the ceremony. It came as a relief when we went home at dusk to know that I couldn't greet or speak to anyone otherwise I would be expected to repeat the entire ceremony the next day. Frankly, after the experience, I was in no mood for a chat with anyone.

As custodians of sacred knowledge and weavers of community and continuity, African women are called to be mindful of how they relate to their families, communities and the world. While it is important that African women are supportive and protective of their men and children, this should be done in a way that is not detrimental to their health and wellbeing. It is true that African women cannot afford to give up on African men. After all, their spiritual liberation is intertwined.

However, standing by men is not the same as remaining silent and not taking a stand against men when they act in a manner contrary to the ancient practice of respecting women's humanity and integrity. While it is important to seek interventions that reconcile rather than divorce the African woman from men, this

should not be done in a way that is detrimental to the physical, psychological and spiritual wellbeing of women.

The first step is for African women to focus on their primary relationships (their relationships with themselves) and rebuild relationships (their relationships with their bodies and their souls). It is only when African women feel good and centred in their identity that they can contribute meaningfully to a review of their relationships with men. Creating alternative modes of self-love will, in some instances, break away from tradition. This includes replacing negative views of African femininity with positive thought and action.

To illustrate, the application of the concept of 'motherism' in African feminism should not be used to keep women within the confines of their biological functions. Interpretations of proverbs such as *mmangwana o tshwara thipa ka fa bogaleng* (literally, 'woman holds the knife at the sharp point' - meaning that as a mother, a woman gives her life to her husband and children) focus on the value of self-sacrifice that society expects from a woman. This value in itself is not negative. However, when it is enforced in an unequal society, it limits the woman's potential to pioneer alternative modes of gender relations and leadership within and outside the home.

Similarly, African men need to find time and create space to heal their wounds rather than taking out their pain on women. In his essay 'Redefining Masculinity in a Changing World', Frank Meintjies asks the questions: what is a man? What is manhood?

'We all think that manhood is a great thing. On the outside, this manhood looks tough and powerful yet is fragile, false and comes with a lot of pain. Confounded by the belief that men don't cry, many of us shy away from feeling our pain. Feeling our pain and shedding our tears as men represents a road to our recovery, to our true manhood.'

*When you do something that hurts other people, instead of being strongly condemned, society might encourage you. If you cheat women, undermine them or even abuse them, other men will not stand up against you... As we get together for a drink in pubs, when we call women bitches and whores, other men will not condemn the behaviour. For men, our identity as males is shaped by the sexist reality into which we were born. That reality includes exerting power over others, particularly women.'*¹⁹

Meintjies goes on to explain that the kind of masculinity described above robs men of the ability to feel, particularly the ability to give and receive love.

*'Very often, we push away people who want to be close to us. I am sure that many women know how difficult it is to work out what is going on in the mind of the man they are with. Often, we hide behind a newspaper and when we are asked what is wrong, we reply "nothing". As a result of this, we move into isolation and find ourselves alone... The thing about love is that you have to open yourself, you have to take the risk of being vulnerable.'*²⁰

An inability to give and receive love is not limited to men. From my personal relationships with men and my work, I know that modern women also struggle with this issue. Many of us wear our wounds like impenetrable armour and carry them from one relationship to another and experience relationships as battlegrounds for power in a male-dominated world. Women's inability to love in modern society can also be compounded by living in a consumerist culture that equates expressions of love with receiving expensive gifts and not with simple acts of care.

Humans have come to view vulnerability and humility as a sign of weakness. We hope and pray that African women and men will rediscover each other's souls and reclaim their innate ability to give and receive love. Perhaps in time African women and men will cultivate a commitment to love, compassion, and intellectual and spiritual companionship. In time, African men and women might find time in their busy BEE lives to hold hands and recite the poem 'I Love Myself the Way I Am' by Jai Josef, a Native American spiritual healer and poet:

*'I love myself the way I am
There is nothing I need to change,
I'll always be the perfect me,
There is nothing to rearrange.
I'm beautiful and capable of being
The best I can,
And I love myself just the way I am.*

*I love you just the way you are,
There's nothing you need to do
When I feel the love inside myself,
It's easy to love you.
Behind your fears, your rage and
Tears, I see your shining star.
And, I love you just the way you are.'*²¹

Another relationship that requires review is the one between black and white women. The tension emanating from race and class privilege has not been adequately addressed within the context of violence against women in South Africa. It is a tension that was raging behind the scenes during the Zuma trial.

In many ways, white women still operate as the architects of theory and practice for many organisations working in the area of women's empowerment, in the arena of violence against women

in particular. Because they had access to quality education and resources, white women activists have a status that is different from that held by black women activists. In this way, they remain better positioned to influence policies, legislation, programmes and strategies geared towards addressing violence against women. A perusal of published material in this sector attests to this fact. White women have the skills to undertake research and publish; as a result there are few black women doing the same in the movement. Instead, they remain the subjects of research and the movement.

In her article 'The Right to Self-determination in Research', Dabi Nkululeko asks the question: can a segment of an oppressed group rely on knowledge produced, researched and theorised by others, no matter how progressive they are?²² Nkululeko's article was written in 1987. Not much has changed since then. The agenda of addressing and responding to gender violence in black communities does not lie in the hands of black women and men. The anti-rape movement in South Africa is still led by white women. While many of them are doing a splendid job in supporting black women in dire situations, why is it that they remain the only ones who write and speak for black women and men?

What does research on masculinity mean when most of the subjects are black men from the ghetto and villages who are responding to research questions posed by white scholars, both male and female? What does this mean for a redefinition of African feminism? What does this mean for re-weaving the threads that make up the black family which have been torn apart by racial, class and cultural-imperialism?

Developing paradigms that regard white culture as the main event and relegate indigenous wisdom to the fringes is an expression of latent colonialism. This situation has serious implications for the production of knowledge within the women's movement in South Africa. Knowledge is power. If knowledge production is reserved for the privileged few, the situation does

not augur well for correcting the imbalance of power between black and white women. It is critical that a pool of African women leaders should be formed at political and economic levels, within academia and civic movements, and in communities so that they can create financial and technical support mechanisms to enable African women document their own stories.

In her 1987 article, Nkululeko warns that we should not overlook the fact that sometimes native researchers, like their Western counterparts, have to unlearn their privileges. She may have inherited the ideological trappings of her class, which may not be in line with the everyday life experiences of the majority of women who are discriminated against in their communities. Because she is alienated from her cultural heritage, she too may use tools that are based on colonial scholarship.²³

Currently, African women's strategies, that are geared towards creating peace in their lives and those of their families cannot only depend on Western strategies which, as we all know, have failed many an abused woman and child. It is critical that strategies should include ways of restoring the souls of African men and women. Moral regeneration cannot happen without a renewal of the soul. The renewal of the soul follows a path that cannot be legislated for in parliament or studied at a prestigious university. It is a way of finding the spark that will trigger a loving and compassionate way of being with who we are after having been told that we are of no substance and value.

One way of reclaiming who we are is through confronting the prevailing stereotypes about blacks, women and men. For example, upholding the notion that black men are incapable of controlling their sexual desires is a tragedy for the whole nation.

In an article about Zuma and the ANC in *Business Day*, Karima Brown and Vukani Mde state that 'men who find themselves without a condom at the precise moment it is needed, go right ahead anyway, placing themselves and their partners in

danger'. The article also argues that it is important for South Africans to overcome personal denial about the HIV/AIDS pandemic and that we should speak honestly and openly about the 'political denial that gives our personal behaviour a veneer of respectability'.²⁴

As *umalume* who is given the responsibility of passing on sexual teaching from one generation to the next, Zuma's comments about Zulu culture and sex must not be taken lightly in a country where many young boys do not have fathers or elders to teach them, and depend on TV for knowledge about life and living. As a leader and an elder who is passionate about his country and his culture, as a father who is equally passionate about the future of his children's children, it is incumbent on Zuma to ask for guidance and reverse the negative effects of his false teachings. A rushed apology at a press conference on his way to sing *Umsihini wam* at a rally in a nearby stadium is definitely not the path to the soul.

4. Rape is a crime of passion

The belief that men rape because they cannot control themselves sexually is a myth based on the belief that once they are aroused, men cannot help themselves. This means that once a man gets past the 'point of no return' he cannot do anything but penetrate a woman's body and is unable to exercise restraint and control over his sexual urges.

In her book *Forgiveness and Other Acts of Love*, Stephanie Dowrick highlights the value of restraint in our lives. Restraint, she argues, is an act of will; the expression of deciding for yourself.²⁵ At points in our lives, we are faced with many paths and decisions we have to make. The difficulty of making the right choice is often exacerbated by the speed with which life flies by in contemporary society. Every second and every day, we are bombarded with information from the media (audio, electronic, print), telephones, e-mail and endless meetings.

This information overload and the demands of modern life put us under immense pressure to make instant choices.

This state of affairs affects people's ability to reflect, which in turn affects their capacity to exercise restraint. Reflection is a necessary condition for clarity and influences the choices we make. Reflection gives restraint room to grow, which in turn becomes an expression of intention.

*'Restraint offers a space between intention and action... The more conscious you are of that space, and the freer you are to occupy it more easily, you can choose whether and how to act.'*²⁶

Dowrick argues that restraint cannot be practised without some degree of maturity.²⁷

Rather than behaving like children who thrive on instant gratification, mature adults have to learn to engage their impulses (sexual or otherwise) in the most sober manner. Refusing to be responsible for our actions is not only an immature act but a refusal to be fully human. Denying our mistakes and acting as though they did not happen or were caused by others deprives us of the human element. No-one is perfect but we have to acknowledge this and not ignore it.

When he was charged with rape and corruption, Zuma blamed other people for his actions. In his corruption trial he blamed people behind the alleged conspiracy plot to oust him from the presidential race, and in the rape trial he blamed the complainant for wearing a skirt and a kanga as well as sending him 'signals' that she wanted to have sex with him. By doing this Zuma portrays himself as a powerless slave to sexual provocation and a helpless victim of outside forces.

We all have to learn to practise restraint every day so that we can prevent ourselves from committing endless mistakes that require public and private apologies. Restraint is a source of

To further illustrate cultural conditioning of male domination, Robert Jensen outlines ways in which sex is described in a sexist society. Jensen notes that the slang term for sexual intercourse, fuck, is used differently in different situations.

*'To fuck a woman is to have sex with her. To fuck someone in another context ("he really fucked me over on that deal") means to hurt or cheat a person. And when hurled as a simple insult ("fuck you") the intent is denigration and the remark is often a prelude to violence or the threat of violence. Sex in patriarchy is fucking. We live in a world in which people continue to use the same word for sex and violence...'*³¹

A gay man who has chosen to abstain from patriarchal sex and pursue alternative ways of loving, Jensen argues that sexist beliefs about sex apply to both gay and straight men. In his opinion all men receive, to some degree, the same training and they respond to life from the dominator power model. In his call for the inclusion of intimacy, love, trust and respect between people, Jensen notes that sex is often described in terms of heat – for example hot babe, hot hunk, sizzling hot sex. In response to the heat generated by sex, Jensen asks the question:

*'But what if our embodied connections could be less about heat and more about light? What if instead of desperately seeking hot sex, we searched for a way to produce light when we touch? What if such touch were about finding a way to create light between people so that we could see ourselves and each other better? If the goal is knowing ourselves and each other like that, then what we need is not heat but to light the path.'*³²

The greatest challenge facing society is finding ways of dismantling the sexist notions of power over weaker people – be it other men, women, children, or other races or tribes. Searching for ways in which men and boys can resist being dominated and stopping the domination of others is particularly important.

Moving beyond re-educating individual men and boys in families, school, church, the workplace and other social agencies and including a review of larger systems of exploitation and oppression that make violence acceptable at national and global level is equally important. Formulating concrete and practical means of resisting systems of exploitation is certainly one of the greatest challenges facing men and boys in the 21st century. Similarly, it is critical for women and men to work together in developing partnership models based on mutual respect and compassion.

Almost all male activists and writers concerned about the escalating levels of violence against women call for a reconnection with the humane male psyche. Whilst acknowledging that men's violence could be a consequence of childhood experiences of violence, Zakes Mda questions male pain and argues that men must create spaces to heal so that they can, in time, experience the fullness of loving and living.

*'We need to learn that compassion is not a sign of weakness. In time, when we have evolved into better human beings, we shall know how to cry not only because of pain but because of beauty too. Being able to cry because something is so beautiful that it moves you to tears is, in my opinion, a mark of greatness.'*³³