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Women and Rhetoric in South Africa: Understanding Feminism and Militarism

By

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COMPULSORY DECLARATION

This work has not been previously submitted in whole, or in part, for the award of any degree. It is my own work. Each significant contribution to, and quotation in, this dissertation from the work, or works, of other people has been attributed, and has been cited and referenced.

Signature: Date: _____

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and

To those who believed in me, encouraged me to never give up and had faith when I had doubt. I dedicate this to you and I thank you from the bottom of my heart.

“It is a miracle that curiosity survives formal education”

Albert Einstein

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Abstract

This paper is divided into two sections, their first being feminism and its experience in Africa. The second section focuses on the experience of Women in the armed forces.

Section one looks at how African women and women of African decent define their realities regarding equal access to resources and how they use their histories to create an understanding of how they now define themselves. This is exemplified by the role of feminism and how it has been accepted, reshaped and in some instances rejected by African women. Race is a central theme that runs through both sections and this paper highlights how the issue of race was historically tackled and how race still has a pervasive influence regarding why African women have created particular discourses in order to legitimise their way of life. African Feminism, Africana Womanism, South African Motherism are the epistemologies that have been unpacked against the general mainstream understanding of Western Feminism. This section is fraught with debate that both White female and Black female academics in Africa seek to explain what shapes power, equality and legitimacy for women in Africa. These themes are placed centrally in the South African public sphere and the history of the liberation struggle is used to exemplify the application of these discourses.

The second section looks at the history of women in South Africa and the armed forces and how their participation can in part be explained by the epistemologies of African Feminism and Africana womanism. This section focuses on the role of Women in Umkhonto We Sizwe and South African Defence Forces. Again the Black African woman's reality is pitted against the deemed White reality in these organisations in order to illustrate how these epistemologies are continuously accepted and rejected by women who sought to fight either for the maintenance of Apartheid and those who fought against it.

The common thread that both these sections hinge on is that of justice and equality and how these two ideas are constantly fought for in their various outputs and platforms. I investigate how Black African women are constantly fighting for a justice against the influence of 'colonial' ideas, and Western feminism is one of those ideas that are at the forefront of being resisted. I conclude by arguing that even though African feminists and Africana Womanists do have a legitimate claim to the experience of justice and equality for women in Africa. Their methodology uses much of the same silencing as done by Western feminism. There has been an attempt to correct the injustices and inequalities experienced by in the armed forced during the South African liberation struggle, however these have not been fully addressed in the new democratic dispensation. This has by in large been hindered the truthful reality of women who served in the armed forces was silenced and ignored for the greater good of a national struggle. The various feminist epistemologies in South Africa have not helped in the undoing of this silence nor have they helped in addressing the continued minority role of women in the armed forces.

Introduction

There is an interesting point, where at the cross-section of being a researcher of rhetoric and an observer of gender relations, I find that my biology of being a woman filters the experiences of how I understand literature, arguments and social interactions. I view this as a result of an acceptance and understanding of how my biology and socialization has predetermined to a large extent my relations with men, women and texts. It is with this in mind that as a rhetorician I began to explore the relationship between the state of being a woman and the issue of transformative justice in post apartheid South Africa. Furthermore I also focussed on women in the military to exemplify this status. I have a bias towards trying to understand this enigmatic exclusive group of women who chose to create their professions in the predominately male institution. I worked on a sense that their experiences are far more heightened regarding justice and womanhood in South Africa.

The question I seek to answer is how do women, when they are in they are in challenging rhetorical or communicative spaces (places in which they are in the minority and have limited access), create and maintain identities for themselves? The understanding of the “feminine/feminist” perspective is premised on the idea that there is an oppositional understanding of the world that manifests itself as masculine. Rhetoric has often been accused as being a male preserve that fails historically to accommodate the role of women in creating a rhetorical path in history, so by analysing arguments for feminism and implied narratives of justice, I hope to create the opportunity for the two disciplines of Rhetoric and Gender Studies to interact on the South African intellectual plain.

Africana Womanism and African feminism are feminist epistemologies that have provided arguments to validate the experience of women of Africa and of African origin against a mainstream feminist discourse. It is the claim of this paper that these African feminist and womanist discourses are also in fact instruments that enable a certain transformative social justice to occur. It is a justice that aims to create a distinguishable difference between women who were colonized and those who were deemed the colonisers, and a social justice that raises a global consciousness which validates African women’s histories, present realities and future expectations.

The Apartheid experience of women in the military also serves as tangible example of how justices and injustices were experienced by South African women. My paper aims to provide a rational for how African feminism and its derivative of Motherism can explain the input and the outcome of women’s participation in the armed forces.

I will unpack the testimonies by given by the women in the armed forces in a similar fashion as to how the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) used testimonies to create a truth surrounding the experience of the past which had not been documented and very few knew or understood. At this point I would like to note that women who were in the armed\guerrilla forces did not testify about the discrimination that occurred within their organisations, so I rely on testimonies given to researchers who specifically sought to understand the gender dynamics of women in the armed forces during the time of apartheid. In as much as the outcome of the TRC sought to create transformative justice, I would argue that the testimonies given by the women cadres also sought to build a picture of the past and by highlighting their challenges they sought to change the internal practices of the armed forces in a new democratic dispensation. This action therefore validated the efforts for societal change put forward by the fight for women's equality and liberation.

Gender Analysis, can loosely be defined as a process of spotting the differences and examining the similar needs of the responsibilities, statuses, positions and privileges of women and men in society. This analysis is based on the idea that gender is an essential variable in the development process. What is important to acknowledge is that Gender Analysis is looking at women and men in an almost apolitical way. It is a tool that examines the multiple layers of social relations and identities among women and men individually and collectively, and the complex interconnections among gender, imperial, class, race-ethnic relations.

“Gender Analysis move[s] out of the home and the private/personal world in order to explore the constructions of gender relations in the community, the school, the government and the economy” (Mbilinyi 1994:34).

The relationship between men and women cannot be discredited that is why there is a theme of 'male and female' interaction and relationships that runs through chapters. This relationship together with racism is pivotal in the attempt to unpack African feminism, Africana Womanism and Western Feminism in relation to each other. It is also a theme that runs through unpacking the experience of women in the armed forces. As mentioned Gender Analysis aims to situate the experience of gender relations in apartheid South Africa and how this in turn shaped how women's participation in male institution such as the army was an important phenomena to understand.

The Feminist Standpoint theory.

To illustrate this point I will use the example of how a group of artists in an art studio can have varying viewpoints in how to interpret a 'still life.' There are a set of objects placed in a

particular space of a studio and arranged in a certain manner by the art teacher. This arrangement is called the 'still life'. Each artist is in a different position in relation to that 'still life'. The assessment the art teacher makes of each student is not done through the knowledge of what they know the still life is comprised of, but rather by the knowledge that when an artist is in a particular place in the studio, they can only see and draw a limited number of objects, they will see the shadows differently, they will also see the lighting differently. Each composition will have to differ from artist to artist depending on where they were positioned in relation to the 'still life'. It is the same way we begin to understand "situated knowledge" it is about how people understand the same discourse in different ways, which reflects the distinct relations in which they stand to it.

"Feminist standpoint [is] a place outside the dominant frame of categorized social sciences knowledge from which it is possible to construct sociology respectful of women's subjectivity. Everything begins with the everyday life, all concrete experiences and all abstract knowledge..." (Oakley 1998:713). The foreseeable problem with the Standpoint theory is when one claim forces itself to speak on behalf of others, because a particular discourse can claim itself as superior to other disadvantaged groups, thus creating bias and stereotypes. This dilemma is particularly abhorrent within feminist epistemology when one particular view of feminist thought prevails over all other ideas. For instance, the arguments provided by the Africana Womanists and African Feminists is that when a White, Western understanding of feminism translates itself as the ubiquitous discourse in research methodology and in society ignoring the idea that a Black, African experience or interpretation of feminist epistemology may be vastly different to that prevailing discourse; or even the idea that only women researchers can research topics that deal with women therefore leading to the complete exclusion of men in feminist epistemology. I assert at this juncture that notions of African Feminism and Africana Womanism begin to highlight their difference from mainstream Feminism. Africana Womanism and African Feminism are ways in which women in Africa have started to claim their justice and validation for their experiences given the impact of colonisation, racial oppressions and culture on women's lives in Africa. These two discourses I also will argue in the paper help form some of the governing principles of how women in Africa relate to each other, men and institutions such as government and the military.

Justice

For this paper I tackle briefly the issue of justice as an its out come resulting in policy change towards the role women play in society. The University of Colorado contributes to the contested milieu of creating a definition by unpacking the ideas of equity and equality in

relation to justice. They propose that at times "justice" is understood as *equality* in that everyone should get or have the same amount, regardless of how hard they work, or "what they put in," an implicit nature of fairness, regardless of context and situation. On the other hand some communities define "justice" in terms of *equity*. That is, people should get benefits in proportion to what they contributed to producing those benefits. In other words, the harder and better you work, the more you should get as a reward for that work. Often the opposite is also asserted-that people should suffer costs *in proportion* to the harm they have done others, which yields the concept of retaliation. Still other people believe in equity with a bottom "safety-net" level which protects people who, because of misfortune or disability, are unable to work or even help themselves. It is through some of these perceptive that policy is created in order to help build a foundation of rule of law and of socio-economic policy.

(<http://www.colorado.edu>: 12/08/09)

Transitional Justice

"Transitional Justice", as explained in the following quotation:

Transitional Justice (including reconciliation; truth commissions; tribunals; local transitional justice mechanisms) Transitional justice refers to the short-term and often temporary judicial and non-judicial mechanisms and processes that address the legacy of human rights abuses and violence during a society's transition away from conflict or authoritarian rule.

1. Addressing and attempting to heal divisions in society that arise as a result of human rights violations.
2. Bringing disclosure and healing of the individuals and society particularly through truth telling.
3. Providing justice to victims and accountability for perpetrators.
4. Reforming institutions to promote democratisation and human rights.
5. Ensuring human rights violations are not repeated and promoting co-existence and sustainable peace.

(huntalternatives.com 3 July 2009).

However, within Africa, this traditional definition of transitional justice has been challenged by some as being too narrow; because it fails to take into account a condition "where mass poverty and socio-economic concerns inform the needs of victims and the object of justice." An example of this is shown by the way this criticism has been levelled by organizations in countries such as Nigeria, Kenya and Liberia, all of whom have included issues of corruption as a key crime to be addressed, making the argument that this 'structural violence' has had

far wider implications than direct violence, and that it has been and continues to be a fault-line for violent conflict. A further challenge to defining transitional justice in Africa is that of incorporating traditional modes of traditional justice into current modern understandings of transitional justice. Yet, in the case of South Africa, the traditional concept of Ubuntu was used to create a sphere of reconciliation, however how far it was genuinely accepted by victims and perpetrators is still to be analysed as there was and still is much silence regarding the treatment of women within the armed forces during apartheid and currently.

(www.transitionaljustice.org 12 May 2009)

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CHAPTER 1

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Who art thou woman?

In trying to define and unpack what the experiences are for women in Africa it becomes apparent that it is a delicate and thorny process of negotiating several discourses. These discourses, in varying degrees, actively seek to be set apart from the notions of colonialism, race, class and tradition as a way of explaining the current socio-political position of women. Yet, through their very definitions simultaneously include these four pillars as a basis to advocate why one discourse should be regarded as better than another in illustrating the position of African women. These four pillars and their contributions are also challenged repeatedly, and this is exemplified by the arguments that women have in two arenas; firstly, the arguments can be seen among themselves regarding how to validate their socio-political and private spaces as part of a global community and within their own national borders. Secondly, there are the arguments concerning interactions with men in both the public and private sphere. I have so far purposefully not used the word feminism or womanism as these discourses define themselves as different and this pseudo-antagonism will be unpacked by the rest of this paper. This will be done by charting the history and the premises that build of each of these discourses and then assess how discourses have been claimed by women in Africa in order to validate themselves.

It is however important at this time to distinguish between the female, feminine, and feminist characteristics because these three spheres of identity have different meanings yet, interact with each other. Female and feminine are often understood to be synonymous however, for reasons of respectability and as foundations for ideological framing, Women's Studies, Feminist Theorists and Gender Analysts have expounded on the definitions of these spheres of 'being' as biological, political and social constructs. The works done by Toril Moi, Elaine Showalter and Julia Kristeva are often used to illustrate the distinction. Toril Moi (1985) explains these identities through three period distinctions: feminist (political), female (biological) and feminine (cultural). Showalter (1981) defines it in terms of phases of development: feminine (imitation), feminist (protest) female (self-expression). Kristeva, as discussed by Jones (1984) defines it as a three stage struggle: radical feminism (equality demanded), liberal feminism (femininity extolled), anti-metaphysical feminism (dichotomy rejected).

The reality of the female experience in South Africa is in many ways common to the rest of the world. Here too in South Africa, women's rights have been suppressed because of a combination of factors such as tradition and culture, sexism and the mainstreaming of what was thought of as "feminine behaviour". Both women and men have helped to build and

maintain the acceptable understanding of what is feminine in conjunction with certain variants of feminist schools of thought. The script of women's violence and oppression in South Africa also follows many scripts around the world. This oppression is lived and relived in many ways. For instance through domestic violence against women, rape, low salaries for women, segregation and exclusion from specific places, careers and diminished roles of leadership. The following claim may be interpreted as blasé, but the experiences of women in South Africa are really not that spectacular or that different in form when compared to many other places in the world. So why study these feminine experiences if all we are expecting is really much of the same story that has been experienced by everyone else?

One can argue that the female experience in South Africa is unique because its history and traditions are different and so are the definitions of progress and rights, yet women still arrive to the same points of struggle as every other community. Added to that, the Constitution and its provisions and other social factors influence the experiences. We can never ignore the influence of race, class and ethnicity in forming public perception and behaviour towards women. Or for that matter how the aforementioned factors control how that authority is exerted by the women concerned. In essence, I would like to argue that there are unique events in South Africa that have shaped the rhetorical expression of feminism in South Africa. Events such as the how women experienced and were included in the liberation struggle, particularly of the then termed guerrilla organisation *Umkhonto we Sizwe (MK)*, added to that the experience of *Truth and Reconciliation Commission* hearings in 1996 and how the resultant outcomes of justice were created and denied for women in the post-apartheid condition. These events, I argue, have also fundamentally influenced the experiences for women who are in positions of authority or for those who work in institutions that are accepted as masculine, such as the military. Furthermore, these events have also altered to varying degrees how feminism is experienced and understood in South Africa therefore building a feminist understanding that is slightly different to the rest of the African continent, and even more different when compared the experiences of the West. These claims will be unpacked in the course of this dissertation.

Studying anything to do with women's experiences in Africa leads any scholar to try and piece together a very difficult puzzle whose key pieces are African feminism, Western feminism and to a lesser degree Africana Womanism. These ideologies all debate the influence and value that the aforementioned 'four pillars' have regarding women's interactions and relationships with each other and with men. With so many variants and expressions, it is difficult to decipher what all the arguments are about, however there is a *core ethos* that prevails, primarily that of equal access, equal opportunity and equal rights to

those of men *and* in terms of race, particularly for African feminism and Africana Womanism.

The purpose of this paper is not to propagate or to campaign for any particular theory, but to look at what are the techniques and arguments presented by women from Africa and of African descent that have shaped discourses such as African feminism and Africana Womanism. In addition what material or events can these arguments be seen and do the events or the arguments enable or hinder the integrity of the discourse?

Feminist Theories

Cott (1987) provides evidence for how the word “feminism” came to such common use in our modern history, accordingly:

“people in the 19th Century did not say feminism. They spoke of the advancement of the woman, woman’s rights and women’s suffrage. Most inclusively they spoke of women’s movement, to denote the many ways that women moved out of their homes to instigate struggles for civic rights....But to 20th Century ears – when the woman movement began to sound archaic, the word feminism came into frequent use.”

(Cott 1987:3)

Since then, the terminology of feminism has been etched into our history and day to day lexicon. By becoming an ideology it gave way to principles and values that went across the gender divide, however they were not principles that were accepted by everybody.

Sorensen and Krolokke (2006), give a brief history of the three waves of feminism and the ideologies that supported each wave of thinking. The “first wave” was epitomized by the movement that allowed women to vote in the United States. “Men and women shall have equal rights throughout the United States and every place subject to its jurisdiction” (Cott 1987:125). The Constitutional Amendment was introduced in into Congress on December 10 1923. This set in place a momentum for women activists to challenge the gender roles and performances that were expected from women during the late 19th and early 20th Centuries. A new rhetoric came into play that encompassed “equal opportunities feminism” or “equity feminism” (Sorensen and Krolokke 2006:7), this in turn permitted a societal view of eroding the distinction between sex and gender. This era is marked by the literature of Virginia Wolf and the academic works of Mary Wollstonecraft. “Second wave” feminism is highlighted by the slogan “The personal is political”. Here the crucial message was that women were victims of a patriarchal, commercialized, oppressive beauty culture. One of the major protests included a protest against the Miss America Beauty Pageants in 1968 and 1969. In this framework, radical ideas or what was termed radical feminism drew impetus from looking at

other areas of social inequality. Among them, student protests against the war in Vietnam, lesbian and gay movements and the Civil Rights Movement. “The personal is political” was a way of fostering a link between feminist ideology in combination with social, sexual and personal struggles.

It is important to note that second wave feminism was a myriad of feminisms working at different paces. This opened up to why there is so much diverse literature on feminist epistemology. Finally, there is “third wave” feminism, which is still rapidly changing and evolving to this day. However, this wave is marked by the explosion of new media technologies and social movements that have impacted the messages and the values of the first two waves of feminist thought. This type of feminism is not only focussed on American or European discourses, but incorporates transnational activism. It narrowly focuses on the threats to women’s rights (that were established by the first and second waves) in the wake of a new global order. Nonetheless, what is most characteristic about third wave feminism is that it challenges the definitions of womanhood that were created by the first and second wave. In doing so the “personal is still political” in how women experience and define it in the 21st Century.

African Feminism

There is the understandable misinterpretation to regard African feminism as a part of Third Wave feminism however, it is within the realm of the Third Wave feminist interpretation that the tensions between race and culture begin to rear themselves. The tension has even led to the rejection of the concept of Third Wave feminism to be even applied as a principle for African women. It is because this wave is interpreted as an ideology that is hinged on Western Feminism, or to be more explicit, “historically recent Europe and America social movements founded to struggle for female equality and subsequently carried forward in an imperial march across the globe.” (Oyewùmi 2003:1).

There is an agreement on a generally perceived hegemonic discourse of what feminism is and it is derived from western definitions. This is because traditionally and geographically the west has provided the disposition and the strategies associated with this movement. Natasha M. Gordon in her paper “*Tonguing the body*”: *Placing Female Circumcision within African Feminist Discourse* highlights this point and supports it with other feminist literature done by Chandra Mohanty. She argues that “Western Feminism has ultimately created an ahistorical, stagnant ‘Third World Woman’ that is constituted as a coherent group, (thus) sexual difference becomes conterminous with female subordination, and power

automatically defined in binary terms: people who have it (read: men) and people who do not (read: women)” (Gordon 24:1997).

Some argue that feminism in Africa has always existed. It is only because in Africa there has been no word linguistically to describe this position that women in Africa have blindly ascribed to the expression brought to Africa from the West. Accordingly, some writers and theoreticians who study gender relations in Africa have argued that traditional African societies have always thought and lived in a feminist way long before the colonial invasion. Kolawole stated:

“Although many African languages have no synonym for feminism as it is defined by the West, the concept of group action by women, based on common welfare in social, cultural, economic, religious and political matters is indigenous and familiar to a majority of these women”¹ (Arndt 2002:31)

This does open up a debate of interpretation, it cannot be fairly argued that every traditional alliance of African women was feminist in nature as that implies that a feminist organisation is simply a gathering of women who may or may not seek to challenge gender inequalities that repress and discriminate against women.

The linguistic claim may or may not be wholly true, as I have sought to find proof for this claim for future study. However, for this paper I consider it as a point of departure towards understanding the fragile relationship between the Western Feminism and African Feminism.

Feminism, in as much as it has a concern for the rights of women, the various schools of thought are only as effective as how persuasive the arguments are presented for each ideology. Much of women’s interpretations and debates of how to understand the world are cemented in methods of persuasion. This is demonstrated by how a generalised group experience creates a standpoint position in which to argue why one interpretation of the woman experience is better exemplified by a particular theory.

Standpoints are the point of creating credibility for much of the discourse and theory of second and third wave feminism. These *credibilities* are very difficult to challenge as they are subjective and the evidence that these ideologies use to further solidify their positions are based in some part on forensic evidence such as documented racial discrimination and testimonies of persons who have experienced some form of discrimination. However, there is no escape from the tendency to generalise. Arndt (2002:58) argues that even though this generalisation does occur. This should not imply a denial of “Africa’s ethnic, cultural, social, economical, political and religious heterogeneity.” It seems that methodological convenience

¹ In Susan Arndt (2002) *the dynamism of African Feminism: Defining and Classifying African Feminist Literatures*.

of generalising does create a problem as the same weaknesses that African Feminists and Africana Womanists accuse Western Feminists of being guilty of, are the same forms of rational that they have. Simply put, no discourse can point fingers of prejudice without prejudice being pointed right back at them.

For advocates of African feminism what comprises an 'African' woman is very much determined by race. Although there are many 'White' women who were born in Africa and consider themselves African by virtue of being raised on the continent, they are excluded from the discourse of African feminism by virtue of their histography and skin colour. Therefore, it can be argued that African feminism is premised on 'Black' skin colour and culture and identity of Blackness on the African continent.

Under the auspices of aiming for some virtue of fairness, I will present the debate and drama that surrounds African Feminism from both 'White' and 'Black' feminists who do research in Africa. Amanda Gouws (1993) and Barbra Klugman (1994) will be representing the 'white' point of view that is positioned against some of the claims set by African (read Black) feminism. This is not to suggest that these are the only points of view that are present, nor is it to say that these are the most representative. The function is to merely highlight the contention in defining the African feminist experience and how can it be justifiably representative given the history of apartheid that is juxtaposed against the new post-colonial condition of unity, equality and value for all regardless of the economic, religious, cultural, political and racial background

At this point I have referred to the distinction of feminisms as West and African, but in order to unpack how African feminist theoreticians distinguish themselves from West is through the use of race and colonialism. In fact many Africans view Feminism with anxiety because of the interpreted Whiteness of feminism. Ardnt (2002:45-52) presents the following assertions to support this anxiety. For her, the basis of suspicions about feminism from African women is because the discourse is interpreted synonymously with White Western Feminism. White feminists are interpreted to practice the very behaviour for which oppressions such as colonialism, cultural imperialism and patriarchy are built on - ignorance and arrogance. Ardnt claims that "they do not see beyond their own society, and hence ignore and marginalise the problems of African women." Furthermore, this accusation is mainly directed at liberal feminists, because it is interpreted that "they presume to be able to speak on behalf of all women." If this is the main assertion then it is understandable why Western feminism is viewed as patronising. If they are basing their assessment of African women as simple minded and in need of emancipators without really being informed about the

situation and the problem of women in African countries, “ultimately, [what is interpreted is that] White western feminism is not only culturally imperialist but even racist.”

In addition, ‘White Western Feminism,’ is interpreted as solely concentrating on the question of gender and ignoring the influence that have shaped by the context of the reality for African women such as other political, economic, cultural and social mechanisms of oppression inclusive of racism, neo-colonialism, cultural imperialism, capitalism, religious fundamentalism as well as dictatorial and or corrupt systems. The role white women have played in shaping the African history is also repelled because they are seen as beneficiaries and even protagonists of systems that oppress African men and women. In this vein Nora Chase, a Namibian Black woman activist argued:

“...the minute you hear about feminism one immediately puts in the connotation of European and North American women’s struggles. These are women from societies which have long been independent – people who support the governments...that support our oppression. I could never feel solidarity with that.”

There is a train of thought that emphasizes that feminism focuses on issues of justice for women, especially political rights. This however is not limited to, but it specifically deals with women's bodies. This concept is offered by Marren Akatsa-Bukkachi (2005), who in turn rejects the experience of racial discrimination as being the cornerstone of identification of African feminism, and offers the idea of an integration of political rights, justice and action of revaluation of the women’s body has to be played out in Africa as part a movement to become a part and keep up with a global community, which is increasingly trying to elevate the position of women. Thus, using the term 'African feminism' positions African women to examine how their unique collection of concerns affecting them is part and parcel of issues of women's emancipation struggles globally. Therefore African feminism has to participate in a powerful, female-centred realm where race is ideally acknowledged, but not a barrier to understanding. It is that this juncture that I would like to introduce some of the challenges faced by African feminists.

Challenges for African Feminism

The first point of disputation comes back to the idea of generalisations about African experiences of racism. Even though African feminists are concerned about the issue of race, there are varying degrees as to how this issue is tackled, as regional differences illustrate. One of the reasons for this variation is because of the perceived reality that Southern African experience is different from East and West Africa. According to Ardnt (2002:38), “Blacks suffer daily and severely from racist discrimination and the issue of “race” is at the core of

social debates and interactions. While citizens of East and West African countries are victims of structural and individual racism, but do not experience it as obviously and omnipresently as Blacks in South Africa, Zimbabwe, Europe or North America.”

Regional identity also adds further problems in creating a definition for African feminism, particularly regarding at which level are the discourses’ subject and terminology to be set. If we were to take national borders as a parameter, it would be possible to distinguish between, Nigerian and South African Feminism for example. These countries’ histories are different and so are their cultures and traditions. “But Nigerian and South African feminisms too are mere constructs which hardly do justice to feminisms’ heterogeneity” Ardnt (2002:35). For example, there is an ethnic plurality of South Africa which is supported by the idea of 11 official languages that include English and Afrikaans (Colonial languages) could there be a Zulu-feminism and what would that comprise of and what would its relation be towards Afrikaner feminism or even Xhosa feminism?

The Men Have Arrived

“Women, women, women, will they ever stop moaning, will they ever stop weeping to find solutions to their problems so that they won’t weep again...it serves no purpose trying to convince each other that women are oppressed. There are better issues to focus on.

Cephas Chitsaka in the Sunday Mail (November 24 1991)

It is debatable whether to place the subject of men under the heading of “Challenges to African Feminism” this is because much of African feminism tries to avoid associating men as a problem as how Western feminism is deemed to problematise men. However, there is still the underlining issue that the relationship between men and women both in the public and private sphere is for the most part viewed as men asserting power over women whether or not women are willing to concede, encourage or reject this position. This then leads us down the path of agency and how it surfaces for the African women’s experience. For example, at the community level women have also discovered forms of agency. “Many are participants in the emerging social movements [within Africa] that are challenging the cost recovery basis on which basic services are delivered. In the absence of perceived weaknesses in the justice system in dealing with violence against women, they have at times carried out ‘citizen’s arrests’. (Hassim 2004:15)

The relationship between men and women is both a challenge and a boost to African feminism therefore to not address the issue of how men have influenced the movement both globally and within the continent would be irresponsible. Studying men and Feminist

thought inevitably comes with the burden of patriarchy and how much it is or is not an influence on women's lives.

“Some of us are convinced of something else: that much of the putting down of women that educated African men indulge in and regard as African culture is a warmed up leftover from colonization. European colonizing men brought with them the burden of confusion; first about their own women, and then about other women – all of which was muddled up by the colonizers’ fantasies about the sexual prowess of both men and women.” (Ama Ata Aidoo 1998:48)

Perhaps what is to blame for the tension and the view of feminism as women who are divorced, man hating banshees who only seek to emasculate and humiliate men has been driven by popular culture and particularly by the “battle of the sexes” is both a figurative competition, disagreement and general discord between men and women and a rhetorical model that has been produced in popular culture time and time again².

This subject also is unavoidably riddled with generalizations about perceptions of men in Africa and of African origin, of which have been in part built by popular culture. African men and their relationship with women have also presented in popular culture through music videos in the genre of *Hip Hop*³. Additionally, the merit that has created these generalizations is what many African feminists seek to challenge and disagree with. It is the outcome of the findings based on the method of inquiry that has been interpreted as racist because of the role of colonization and neo-colonization.

Perceptions about African American men in particular have been highlighted in the media and the assertions supplied by the academics on the subject is that there is an endemic discourse which has led to a racist contribution to the construction of masculinity because of the role of imperialism, concurrently with European definitions of sexuality. Tucker (2003) in her article *Blackballed* argues that “historical images of Black men as hypersexual criminals inform contemporary responses to and representations of Black male basketball players.” And this negative image is further supported by Dangerfield et al (2004), who state

² Retrieved 5 June 2009 http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Battle_of_the_Sexes

The Battle of the Sexes (tennis) is a 1973 exhibition tennis match between Billie Jean King and Bobby Riggs.

The Battle of the Sexes (1914 film) is a 1914 American film directed by D. W. Griffith.

The Battle of the Sexes (1928 film) is a 1928 American remake of the above film, also directed by D. W. Griffith.

The Battle of the Sexes (1959 film) is a 1959 British comedy film starring Peter Sellers.

Battle of the sexes (game theory) is a game studied by game theorists.

Battle of the Sexes (radio contest) is the name of a popular radio contest, TV show, and board game.

Real World/Road Rules Challenge: Battle of the Sexes is an MTV competitive reality television show.

³ Musical Art form based in African American Culture

that to define the Black masculinity to define restricted parameters of cultural property. “Married, middle-class, educated spiritual Black men, who are goal-driven, employed, competent, and non-criminal are missing from both the vast amount of literature and the constellation of media representations of Black males.” Black males have been pathologized and labelled as violent/criminal, sexual, and incompetent/uneducated individuals. This prevalent set of stereotypical depictions of Black masculinity as a stigmatized condition or of Black males as an endangered species makes it extremely difficult to theorize Black masculinities in the same ways as White or other marginalized group masculinities.

Many theorists including African feminists have used the term "patriarchy" in contexts to refer to the African organization of social life and institutional structures in which men have ultimate control over most aspects of women's lives and actions. For example, the assertion that men have access to and benefit from women's labour more than the reverse, or men having unchallenged access to women's bodies as the debates surrounding female circumcision have highlighted.

There is a question challenged to African feminists as to whether or not there could be a new representation of African men both as contributors to literary texts and how they are presented as protagonists in literature, popular culture, political and private spheres, because there are those who are empathetic to the African feminist cause who have been silenced. The question is whether or not there is an attempt to deal with African feminism by demystifying the evolving role of African men whose voice and opinions have not been heard under the drowning of feminist empowerment.

The third problem is that there seems to be an antagonism between African Feminist and Western feminists on the ideas of what is tradition and what is violation. Also in part, a fear from African feminists that this is a re-colonisation being perpetrated by Western feminists who seem to be forcing their ideologies of what “womanhood” should be based on Western lives. For instance the practice of female circumcision in some cultures has not been rejected or banned and this resistance has not come from men, but from women.⁴

Conflicts were made apparent over during the 1980 Copenhagen conference regarding the issue of clitoridectomy as is customary of many African cultures. “African women supported by many non-European women, expressed outrage over the condescending way Western

⁴ The 1995 Egypt Demographic and Health Survey on fertility, reproductive intentions, contraceptive knowledge and use, maternal and child health measures, women's status, and female circumcision. The report also includes the partial findings from an in-depth study of female circumcision among clients at five university hospitals, several rural hospitals, and two clinics in Cairo and Alexandria, which are here described. Findings indicate that 97% of ever married women in 1995 were circumcised. The proportion of circumcised women was lower among women with a secondary or higher education and among women living in Frontier Governorates. 82% of women indicated support for circumcision; 13% desired an end to female circumcision; and 5% were uncertain. 58% believed that the practice was a good tradition.

Feminists, 'were grouping groping in their panties.'" Western Feminists in turn found African women guilty of "reactionary conservatism; their refusal to endorse an immediate and full scale ban on clitoridectomy, and their insistence on addressing general political issues, such as racism, apartheid." (Geisler 2004:11)

The main problem is that there seems to be an antagonism between African Feminist and Western Feminists on the ideas of what is tradition and what is violation particularly regarding the woman's body. Also in part, a fear from African Feminists that this is a re-colonisation being perpetrated by Western feminists who seem to be forcing their ideologies of what "womanhood" should be based on their Western lives

Duality of Thought

I would like to highlight a duality of thought within African feminist thought, Flora Nwapa⁵, an African authoress, expresses the duality of the women in Africa in two minds as to whether they are feminists – or rather, whether they should refer to themselves , or let themselves be referred to, as feminists.

"I have never called myself a feminist. Now if you choose to call me a feminist, that is your business; but I don't subscribe to the feminist idea that all men are brutal and repressive and we must reject them. Some of these men are my brothers and fathers and sons. Am I to reject them too?"

1994 Buchi Echemta (lecture at George Town University)

"I don't think that I am a radical feminist. I don't even accept that I am a feminist. I accept that I'm an ordinary woman who is writing about what she knows.

1984 Flora Nwapa London Book Fair

The above quotes not only exemplify the crisis in determining the experience of feminism in Africa, but also it highlights a form of negotiation that African women are particularly privy to; negotiating a binary existence of Western knowledge and values together with African authenticity and cultural value. This is in addition to the idea that feminism is un-African because it is not part of African culture. It implies, as Amina Mama⁶ provides a some what unflattering statement (at least in the eyes of liberal feminists) towards the description and value of "the 'real' African woman...[who] is content with her subordinate position as wife, mother and beast of burden. She is passive in the face of abuse, tolerant of all forms of

⁵ Flora Nwapa (1931-1993) was Africa's pioneer female novelist and publisher. She is well known for her novels (*Efuru*, *One is Enough*, and *Women Are Different*), and children's literature.

⁶ Mama, Amina. 'Women' Studies and Studies of Women in Africa during the 1990s.' 1995. Available at <<http://www.gwsafrica.org/knowledge/index.html>>, Cited September 2006.

infidelity; her only real ambition is to retain respectability by labouring for the maintenance of a stable marriage and family and seeing to the satisfaction of her husband's desires.”

There is also a process of silencing that takes place within the discourse and it is perpetuated and fuelled by class differences. It is apparent that African feminism is the responses of middle-class educated Black women who are responding to the premises and claims set up by middle-class white women, yet those who are uneducated, poor and in the majority serve the function to highlight differences. Thus the methodology is also as questionable as Western feminisms interpretation on African experiences. Mohanty (1988:72) explains it as thus, “Similar arguments pertaining to questions of methods of analysis can be made in terms of middle-class, urban African and Asian scholars producing scholarship on or about their rural or working-class sisters which assumes their own middle-class culture as the norm, and codifies peasant and working-class histories and cultures as ‘Other’”

There is a challenge that centres on the necessity of constructing and maintaining a movement for African women, which is reflective and is supportive of the diversity within this population. This is highlighted by the fact that not all women share a common experience, as is emphasized by Standpoint theory and simple analysis of the diverse African population. It is important to recognize the tremendous heterogeneity that operates within the boundaries of the term ‘African woman’ yet, at this point still does not include white women who define themselves as being of African decent. This also opens up to questions about who has the platform to speak about African feminism, and why have they been granted that access?

If, as the research has evidenced that women who are involved in creating the base for this discourse are primarily those who contribute to African literature through their stories, can they be interpreted as being better champions for the identity than women who have low level of literacy who have limited access to the platform of popular culture? African feminism transforms how feminism itself is viewed and the practice of the discourse itself. African feminists “see themselves performing traditional roles...without traditional resources...while at the same time undertaking modern activities...while being denied access to modern support systems (Hudson-Weems 1997: 28). Finally, how then can men contribute to the discourse without being identified as an anomaly who has decided to go against his ‘natural’ male state by supporting women’s rights and causes and weakening the advantages of patriarchy? Much of African feminist literature also silences men and protects a certain way of thinking about women in Africa.

Africana Womanism

The resistance to the idea of feminism has been expressed in many ways by African women and women of African descent. One other way that was earlier mentioned to be at loggerheads with African feminism and Western feminism is Africana Womanism. Womanism was a movement started by author Alice Walker⁷ in the 1980s as a way to trying to express and define an alternative reality for African women.

“...the Black folk expression of mothers to female children, 'You acting womanish,' i.e. like a woman ... usually referring to outrageous, audacious, courageous, or willful behaviour. Wanting to know more and in greater depth than is considered 'good' for one ... [A womanist is also] a woman who loves other women sexually and/or nonsexually. Appreciates and prefers women's culture ... and women's strength ... committed to survival and wholeness of entire people, male and female. Not a separatist ... Womanist is to feminist as purple is to lavender. (pp. xi–xii)

Alice Walker 1983 *In Search of our Mothers Gardens: Womanist Prose*.

To begin with, Africana womanism is an ideology that is inclusive so women from the African continent and the African Diaspora. It can be argued that the womanist vision is racially mindful because it aims to give emphasis to the positive aspects of 'Black' life. The politics of the womanist is also unique in its racial-sexual implications as it places itself as a more complex understanding than what is deemed simple white sexual politics. “Womanism addresses more directly the ultimate question relating to power: how do we share equitably the world's wealth and concomitant power among the races and between the sexes?” (Ogumyemi 1985:68)

Africana Womanism however, does not want to be confused with Womanism as it views that there is a disagreeable affinity between feminist and womanist thought as exemplified by the “feminism is to womanism as purple to lavender” analogy supplied by Alice Walker. (Hudson-Weems 1993) the propagator of Africana Womanism is steadfast in claiming that Africana Womanism is neither an outgrowth nor an addendum to feminism. Africana Womanism focuses on the experiences, struggles, needs and desires of Africana Women and men. “[Both] Africana men and women do not accept the idea of Africana women as feminists, there is a general consensus, that the feminist movement is by and large White woman's movement for two reasons. The Africana woman does not see the man as her primary enemy like the white feminist, and secondly, there is a distrust of and suspicious of organizations founded operated and controlled by Whites” (Hudson Weems 1993:8).

⁷ The term *womanist* first appeared in Alice Walker's *In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens: Womanist Prose* (1983), <http://science.jrank.org/pages/8159/Womanism.html#ixzz0TKuUh5Pg> cited 24/09/09

By Africana Womanist's own admission the core resistance has been created by an issue of naming. They concede that Western feminism is a result of successful cultural imperialism imposed by White women from Europe and North America, but *to accept the word 'feminism'* as a source of identity, for Africana Womanist is also to accept the Western women's manner of treating their men and families. "The generalization [created by Western feminism] that many Black feminists share is that all or most Africana men are less worthy than women. This is based upon intellectual laziness, which requires effortless rationalization. Men are simply not the enemy" (Hudson-Weems 1993:25)

In as much as some might jest that 'you are what you eat', or 'give a dog a name, and he will live by it', for Africana Womanist the cornerstone of an individual's identity is explained and shaped by their name. They argue that in African cosmology, naming is very important. And so it is that spirit that the "Africana women in realizing and properly accessing herself and her movement...this is a key step, which many women of African decent have failed to address" (Hudson Weems 1993:55).

There are other key areas that Africana Womanists define themselves using the following arguments:

1. The Africana womanist is *family-centered*, as she is more concerned with her entire family rather than with just herself and her sisters...The most conservative feminists seeks to replicate the individualism of White patriarchal capitalism, a self-centered phenomenon that threatens the very fabric of Africana life and culture. (1993:58)

Altruism is a concept that has been adopted by the Africana womanist in such a way as to set herself apart from a dogma of capitalism which is regarded as individualistic, profit orientated and self-centered. The principle is to be as much of a polar opposite towards ideologies that have come from Western culture. The discourse of Africana life and culture is very much influenced by the experiences of Hudson-Weems who is and African American woman. Therefore the Black experience in the United States which has been shaped by a history of slavery in a country where the Black population is very much the minority has shaped the premises of the discourse. I offer these insights as tentative contribution to help understand why the arguments have been shaped in a particular way. I would argue that the sense of community is far more heightened in the African American community and the imagined or interpreted concept of African culture is held steadfastly as to preserve a sense of identity.

2. The Africana womanist is also *in concert* with males in the broader struggle for humanity and the liberation of all Africana people.

The plight of Black American men is very much under the spotlight in the media; this often comes out in negative ridiculing of daily experiences. Hudson –Weems takes arguments supplied by Clyde Franklin an Africana Sociologist of which he concludes that Black men are portrayed negatively as bad role models and this reinforces the idea that “Black men are relatively powerless in the country [United States], and their attempts at domination, aggression and the like, while sacrificing humanity, are ludicrous.” (Hudson Weems 1993:57-61)

White Women in Africa

The fact that race is the cornerstone of many arguments about what distinguishes African and Africana feminism from Western feminism, inevitably leads to resistance from the ‘accused’. White women in Africa have contributed to the debate in their own way, and although their arguments have been acknowledged, they have been received and interpreted in a singular fashion – they are simply regarded as a reinforcement of mainstream White Western feminism. A lack of response by both Black women and men through literature and research is apparent and this ignoring can be interpreted as a silencing of another voice. Debates like this imply two lines of thought, the first is that White women in Africa are defending their position or trying to create new positions as feminists in Africa. And secondly, rather more at the heart the matter they are trying to move from the intellectual margins of African academy to a point of validation. Amanda Gouws in her paper *Angry Divide* (1993) responds to the literature of African feminism. Gouws (1993:67) initiates the rebuttal by stating that “criticizing the person instead of the argument stifles debate and does not enhance the feminist praxis of enabling other women to speak in their own voices, neither can it raise the consciousness of women who are guilty of racist, patronising, imperialist practices.” It would seem from this position Black African feminists are accused of focussing their debate rather on individuals rather than ideology – to be colloquial, they are taking it way too personally.

Furthermore, she asserts that the arguments supplied by African feminists give the impression that “White women should not speak for Black women; neither should men speak for women. Yet, if research meets the requirements of feminist research, White women can speak about the experiences of Black women, or Black women can speak about the experiences of White women and men can speak about the experiences of women. But this should not occur at the expense of self-presentation.” (Gouws 1993:68) Researchers across many fields studying societies or human behaviour are faced with the critical position that can be summated as the right to authorship. As a researcher what entitles one to be an

expert, or to study a subject if you have no legitimate claim to their reality? The position of objectivity is a challenge to qualitative research or any literature that aims to understand and describe the human experience. If we add to that, the launch pad of feminist discourse being Standpoint theory it becomes understandable why there is little room for tolerance of differing points of view.

Finally, Gouws notes that it is troublesome that there is a denial of class as a variable that also determines the identities of women and quite often divides them. She concedes that the call to take gender, race and class into consideration when analysing women's oppression has initially “stemmed from Black feminists as a criticism against the complacency of White bourgeois feminists.” However, the logical implication of this argument is that Black women in Africa (and the rest of the world?) are united solely by gender and race which is not the case.

If we unpack the history of Women's organisations in South Africa, White women have played an incredibly central role. According to Barbra Klugman (1994) paper, in South Africa there were few women's organisations that focused on women's rights, except for a select number of middle-class, predominately White organisations in the political centre. For instance, the Women's Legal Status Committee which lobbied through the legal profession to improve the legal status of women across all racial categories, and it has played a significant role in influencing pro-women changes in South Africa's marriage and divorce laws. Secondly there was The Abortion Reform Action Group which petitioned for the change of the abortion law. The National Council of Women was a White middle-class group and the more conservative, predominately White Women's Bureau both saw their task as providing their members with information about women's rights. The Housewives League (White) and the Black Housewives League addressed consumer issues, which affect most women directly.

The most vocal of all women's organisations in South Africa, the Black Sash, was not specifically concerned with women's issues in its inception, however, as a political organisation it focussed on the Human Rights questions – abolishing the death sentence, opposing detentions without trial and forced removals of Blacks, and fighting the demolition of squatter camps. The members of this organisation engaged in racial politics by using their Whiteness where it is most powerful – in challenging the White minority government by showing that not all Whites support apartheid and by standing between African communities and members of the South African Defence Force.

Although the Black Sash⁸ recognized that women have specific problems and even employed an organiser to work with rural women, only at its 1990 National Conference did its members agree to incorporate women's issues into its human rights focus. This came partly as the result of pressure from young White feminists who were frustrated at the lack of concern for women's rights in other anti-apartheid organisations and felt that Black Sash would be receptive to their arguments.

For Klugman the source of division between Black and White women was clear, and parts of this argument have been echoed earlier by African feminists. Klugman argues that "on the whole, the conservatism and deep patriarchal tradition among the majority of the [Black] population and the overriding concern with race oppression among most Blacks meant that feminism passed South Africa by. Many Black activist women were suspicious of it, and in the 1980s the view that 'feminism goes hand in hand with capitalism and imperialism' was often expressed by Black women who were involved in organising other women against apartheid...In South Africa, however, predominately Black organisations used motherhood as their rallying cry against injustice. Indeed a central concern was to end migrant labour and reunite families." (Klugman 1994:677) this quote does several things. To begin with it denies the existence of events and actions done by Black South African women prior to colonisation as feminist action. Black women did have positions of leadership and influence. For example many women leader existed throughout Africa even though historical evidence for some is fragment. Nonetheless, "Zulu royal women demonstrated such leadership before during and after Shaka's reign...they took a variety of forms sometime military, but more often economic and religious...including rain making, administering ritual medicine and custodianship of sacred objects (Weir 2007:8-11). Secondly, conservatism and patriarchy cannot account for the enlistment of Black women in the guerrilla forces of Umkhonto We Sizwe, a militant organisation that takes on all the peculiarity of a masculine institution.

Honorary Men

The other bone of contention as argued by Klugman was the relationship White women had with Black men. The reaction that Black men had to White women who worked together with them against the apartheid regime was termed by Klugman as "Honorary men syndrome"⁹, in essence the tension was described as "African [Black] men preferring to work with White women during the liberation struggle create[ed] a certain tension between White and Black

⁸ "Nelson Mandela famously described the women of the Black Sash as the 'conscience of White South Africa' during the Apartheid-era" http://www.Blacksash.org.za/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=161&Itemid=115 Retrieved 28 Aug 2009

⁹ Among some young Black women the relationship between White women and Black men it is colloquially referred to as "Black Man's Kryptonite." The Black men are seen to have far more lax social expectations towards who they find sexually attractive.

women in South Africa, White women's sexuality is hardly ever discussed or debated by Black men."

The rationale supplied for how this relationship came about is described by a series of mitigating factors that arose from the resistance struggle. Apparently, the vast majority of White activists were "middle-class university-educated, single women, and this was because in part they were less driven to enter into the career trajectory." A sentiment that is echoed as to why some women White women joined Umkhonto We Sizwe in a later chapter. It is argued that these women felt more able to work outside a White establishment in addition to thousands of anti-apartheid White men leaving South Africa to avoid compulsory conscription into the army. The reality of the situation on the ground was that the majority of Black activists were men, "and because patriarchal attitudes discouraged women's participation." Consequently, White women often found themselves working with groups of Black men and in this context they were often treated as 'honorary men'. According to Klugman, it seemed that Black men found it easier to act as if these women were asexual. The apparent White women's independence from men and family ties, their ability to make decisions and to move around at night, and so on were completely alien to the men. Nonetheless, the alienation has not been qualified as to whether it was a result of Black men not being able to exercise their patriarchal disposition on these women because they were White or rather it was 'alien' because Black women did not seem to lose ties with their families, nor to make decisions and move around at night. Klugman concludes by stating that, "sexual relationships inevitably happened, some of which were lasting but most of which were fleeting, leaving the wives of the men concerned to feel threatened and angry toward those women."

South Africa and Motherism

It is important to note the difference between gender and sex and how in specific cultural settings, we recognize attributes and actions that then become a "gender display" (Zimmerman and West 1987:129). The authors Zimmerman and West (1987), rely on sociological arguments and theories presented by Erving Goffman to describe and define the differences between sex and gender and how those distinctions begin to blur. To quote, "Sex is a determination made through the application of socially agreed upon biological criteria for classifying persons as females, or males. The criteria can be genitalia at birth or chromosomal" On the other hand gender is, "a socially scripted dramatization of the cultures idealization of feminine and masculine natures, played for an audience that is well schooled in the presentational idiom." (1987:130)

In other words, when a child is born it is either sexed male or female, as a result certain expectations are set regarding the future roles the child is supposed to fulfil in society. These roles pertain to the following:

Performance – how one is supposed to act in public; ones behaviour has expectations thrust upon it, for instance aggressiveness is attributed as masculine behaviour.

Labour – what jobs one can or cannot do and how one is supposed to do those jobs. This also looks at hegemonies regarded either masculine or feminine institutions.

Authority – there are certain areas where a particular sex is expected to assert their authority, conversely there are also certain situations where a particular sex is not expected to have or express authority. For example, domestic nuances such as knowing the best detergent for clothes is an area where women are expected to be an authority and men in general are not.

Sexuality – how that sexuality is expressed or should be expressed is validated by how one is sexed.

By now it is clear to see that how one performs in these different areas is the thread that connects all the roles an individual has to fulfil in order to be a functioning member in the community. Feminine and masculine identities are co-constructed by men and women, and it is through this construction that we gauge how we relate, or judge one another even if we do not know each other personally. Issues arise when individuals rebel against that attributed expectation. It is here in this grey area of rebellion that many women leaders or women in the military service fall. The performance of a public leader, or being in the military has for the most part been given a masculine value, how do women fit in this role.

It is important to highlight that the body of a woman is in fact a symbolic space and a political space; this is why they are such powerful rhetorical agents. By that I mean that a woman's presence or absence in a situation has value, particularly nowadays where there is much scrutiny and analysis on gender relations or gendered experiences. One could even argue that this is why women are used as pawns during war, resulting in either their rape and/or torture. "Often the women may be sexually brutalised before being killed. If men are at home at the time of the attack they are often forced to stand and watch the attackers brutalise and kill the women and children before they themselves are killed" (Meintjes and Goldblatt 1996:28). There is a perverted value during war regarding raping a community's women. This value when unpacked illuminates how men relate to each other, and how men relate to women, and the values placed on the physiology of women.

However, the real question is what is the symbolic value of women and how has that come about to the point that we cringe if we hear or see women being tortured and even worse if we see women being the perpetrators of violent acts? It seems that women have always

symbolised stability and peace. This is quite apparent to the evocation of “motherhood” and what embodies the maternal. These are attributes that have to do with patience, kindness, sincerity and self sacrifice and also a certain amount of decorum. These values affect the way women conduct themselves in their private and public life. For example, the realm of motherhood is sacred, and it comes with expectations – across all cultures. A mother is wise, but not wiser than the father, a mother protective of her children, a mother is loyal to her family a mother is a provider and accountable for her children’s conduct.

Historically, the sexual division of labour was organized in such a way that women were (and still are) the primary caregivers, and were responsible for the bulk of food cultivation and/or processing. Women thus played central but emphatically socially subordinate roles in African society. Some claim that this central but inferior role is currently reinforced through the valorisation of motherhood. For theorists critical of patriarchy, women - both now and in the past - play pivotal reproductive and productive roles that facilitate patriarchal economic and political dominance.

Research done by Barbra Klugman, (1994) explains that in South Africa, however, predominately black organisations used motherhood as their rallying cry against injustice. Indeed a central concern was to end migrant labour and reunite families. Moreover in the words of Ruth Mompati¹⁰, “How can women demand to leave the kitchen sink when they are struggling for the right for housing and indeed to have a kitchen sink?” (Klugman 1994:648)

Afrikaner Nationalism and Motherism were also discourses that complimented each other. Motherism was a vehicle even used by white Afrikaner women who not only expressed and supported anti-apartheid sentiment; there was a range of organisations that supported the cause of Afrikaner Nationalism, such as the “Suid Afrikaanse Vroue Verderasie (South African Women’s Federation) and the Suid Afrikaanse Landbou Unie (South African Agricultural Union. These organisations were understood as the back up support for the National Party.” Even though their deeds showed an attempt to respond to women’s immediate interests, by talking about their roles as mothers, “their overarching intent was to bring women into the broader Afrikaner Nationalist movement...Right Wing women from both the Nationalist Party and the Conservative Party also supported men in the police and armed forces, whether through the Southern Cross Fund, which provided material aid to members of The South African Defence Force, or through the Support the Police Action Group.” (Klugman 1994:656-657)

¹⁰ Ruth Mompati underwent military training and held office as secretary and head of the Women’s section of the ANC in Tanzania. From 1966 to 1973, Mompati remained a member of the ANC’s National Executive Council. Retrieved 12 Aug 2009 <http://www.sahistory.org.za/pages/people/bios/mompati-r.htm>

There is an implied psychological strength enshrined in the notion of motherhood. To explain this I will use the old adage 'Strike a woman strike a rock.' It was a slogan popularised in the 1950s by the racially oppressed black women of South Africa who protested against apartheid policies. It "was displayed on posters by women wearing green aprons with the phrase: "We are the future of our children." These protests and slogans inextricably linked motherhood with political activism for women living under Apartheid in South Africa" (Miller 2003:119). However these women were not militant, they were mothers protecting their children, and by doing so they had a different expectation of conduct. I would argue that this perception of linking motherhood with political activism and certain acceptable forms of violence from women has ingrained perceptions of how women should participate in public life especially in South Africa, this is evident by the shape and form protest action takes no matter what the issue. Furthermore, any deviation from these values renders the participant an illegitimate/strange candidate within the public sphere.

On the other-hand, fatherhood is different from motherhood; it can be a distant relationship, in that it only deals with provision of the physical necessities such as protection and hunting, discipline, and the final authoritative judgement on matters regarding the family welfare. The good performance of these attributes in some communities is enough to justify being a good father. The father figures of a nation are often portrayed as men, who were not afraid to fight and take arms.

South Africa's African Feminism.

For the discussion of this section I would like to begin by highlighting the literature done by Gwendolyn Mikell, who published "African Feminism: Toward a New Politics of Representation" in 1995. In this paper she gives a summation of some limitations women have experienced in legitimating their access to the public sphere and politics in Africa.

Firstly, she supplies us with a description of African feminism as "dealing with multiple oppressions" and as dealing with "women first and foremost as human, rather than sexual beings." This is a key point because a woman's sexuality and reproductive role in society has been a point of contention in determining women's access and mobility in the public sphere. However, as new subtleties in African women's realities surface, politics is becoming the central point around which a new feminist consensus is emerging. The realities of women's political representation in the 1990s are shaping the emerging African women's movement. The question now is that since the 1990s are over and South Africa has now experienced over a decade of independence has that activism helped create a new reality, and how is that reality expressed?

Mikell also points out that “in the early part of this century, women's declining political status was directly related to the oppressive control of the colonial regime. “African women took strength from the fact that their participation was essential if their countries were to end the colonial experience and achieve independence” (Mikell G, 1994:407). The TRC report looks at some of these experiences, like those of Albertina Sisulu and Winnie Mandela. During apartheid these women played pivotal roles in shaping the liberation movement they were leaders in their own right, but they had to exert this leadership in a way that was different from men, for example as mothers, Winnie Mandela was known as, “Mother of the Nation.” because of consequences of having husbands who were key leaders against apartheid and the general apartheid system.

However, I would argue that a key example of African Feminism at it most apparent is seen in the roles that women played by enlisting as part of the armed forces. South African Defence Forces and the Umkhonto We Sizwe represent as a case study of the challenge and path to equality in terms of treatment of female and male cadres and how society revered or chastised these women. Their lives in these institutions were not easy as not all of the women had the same success in integrating into these institutions. I argue that this has shaped very much how women view success in the new South Africa and draws attention to the challenges post apartheid South Africa has regarding the perception of equality, particularly in the armed forces. Again, the role of white women will be illustrated to show that although their whiteness did put them quite firmly in the role of the oppressors there are those who sought to challenge this and this had varied results of success.

Chapter 2

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The Women Are Armed...

The Interwoven Paths of MK and SADF

The history of *Umkhonto we Sizwe* MK and *South African Defence Forces* SANDF cannot be regarded without analysing the general relationship between the military and gender. This section is going to illustrate the journey and the challenges faced by women in MK and in SADF and in doing so highlight the plight historically faced by feminism in Africa. These institutions are traditionally understood as the military or guerrilla forces, yet similar roles and connotations are attached to them. Primarily, they are both male bastions because of the physicality and violence that is associated with the vocation. Their impact is also extremely persuasive in society because these institutions, which are largely governed by men have produced, created the standard norms and practices associated with masculinity and heterosexuality. “To become hegemonic, cultural norms must be supported by institutional power....therefore - it becomes apparent that hegemonic masculinity is a set of norms and practices associated with men in powerful social institutions” (Cock 1991:281). It is in this space loaded with masculine identity that women in most instances through volunteering joined and tried to fit in with varying degrees of success. (Success, being epitomised through leadership and combat positions in the armed forces.)

The debate then concerns whether to look at the process of women joining the armed forces in terms of successful assimilation or a subversion of the hegemonic norm. Either premise however, is shaped by the influence of sexism, feminism and racism. In South Africa racism played a very important mitigating factor in motivating those who may not have otherwise joined a movement that either saw itself as destabilizing the oppressive regime or those who sought to uphold the regimes ideals. In this light MK will supply the rationale for the role that black women played and SADF the role that white women played in the liberation struggle.

A reiteration of masculinity is exemplified in the training procedures of either army. Military training frequently encourages the hatred and defamation of women. It is commonly understood that the use of gender insults are used to motivate men to act aggressively and to dehumanize women within their own culture and women of the 'other' culture. For instance, pornography and prostitution have always been unofficially sanctioned forms of entertainment for soldiers “until 1999, pornography could easily be purchased by servicemen at U.S. military base commissaries, which were one of the largest purchasers of hard core

pornography. Its removal cost the commissaries at least \$10 million” (Marshall 2004:18). Another example is the fact that during training "recruits who were not up to standard were often labelled as 'faggots' or 'homos' or 'moffies.' They were told to “go back to [their] mummies and play with the girls.” Women were mostly referred to as "pieces of meat" (interview with SADF male conscript 1990) (Cock 1994:157). The irony is that women are widely cast in the role of "the protected" and "defended", and are often excluded from military service and almost always - whether in conventional or guerrilla armies, barred from the frontlines. This division that separates the ‘protector’ from the ‘protected’ and the ‘defender’ from ‘defended’ is crucial to both sexism and militarism.

The banning of the African National Congress (ANC) and the South African Communist Party (SACP) in 1960 in addition to the 1961 Sharpeville shootings, resulted in the influential and the exiled to make a deliberate move from being “an exclusively peaceful policy under the leadership of Albert Luthuli, to one where a liberation army was formed – Umkhonto we Sizwe, the Spear of the Nation” (Welz 1998:201). The MK manifesto of 1961 evoked solidarity and an argument for the new shift in rhetoric and mentality by stating, “the time comes in the life of any nation when there remain only two choices: submit or fight. That time has come for South Africa. We shall not submit and we have no choice but to hit back by all means within our power in defence of our people, our future and our freedom” (MK1961)¹¹. This proved to be extremely motivating in encouraging both men and women to join this underground force.

The power and allure of MK also lay in its mystery, mythology and its heightened urban legendary status that was inadvertently caused by its banning. Its membership extent was never clarified because there was a hazy distinction between merely working underground for the ANC and membership in the MK. There was a large majority who regarded themselves as MK cadres, but never formally joined or took an oath of loyalty. The other distinguishing characteristics would be the acquisition of military skills of whatever sort, including military intelligence, and the adherence to military discipline as expressed in a chain of command for an MK cadre to legitimately regard herself or himself as a soldier.

Jacklyn Cock (1994) argues that there are many ways in which the South African case is relevant to understanding the relation between gender and militarisation.

1. *It illustrates how women - far from being marginalised from the process of militarisation - can actively contribute towards it.*
2. *It illustrates the similarities in the position of women in both conventional and guerrilla armies.*

¹¹ Manifesto of Umkhonto We Sizwe leaflet issued by the Command of Umkhonto We Sizwe, 16th December 1961 available on <http://www.anc.org.za/ancdocs/history/manifesto-mk.html>

3. *The South African experience sharpens the debate about the relation between equal rights and women's participation in armies.*
(Cock 1994:154)

According to Geisler (2004) the ANC Wing *Umkhonto We Sizwe* saw a dramatic increase in the numbers of female recruits from 1976 onward. This is a date marked by the Soweto Uprising against Bantu Education which inspired many young students to take up arms in exile. By the end of the 1980s women constituted approximately 20 percent of MK soldiers. By the end of 1987 MK had trained more than 12 000 since the 1967 uprising in Wankie, in the then Rhodesia. However, it is difficult to establish the exact numbers as there was mistrust, and of course the conceived illegitimacy of the organization by the then government thus making it impossible to acquire a figure. However, the deployment of these women remains doubtful, thus helping build a certain mythology surrounding women.

Little is known about the actual numbers of soldiers in Southern African liberation armies, let alone women combatants. Indications suggest that the numbers of women involved were relatively small and those who were actually engaged in combat were even fewer. However, for most members “it was their blackness rather than their femaleness that ultimately determined their political practice – although the power of the antipass campaign to mobilise women undoubtedly lay in its fusion of those two elemental strands of African women’s identity around a single issue” (Geisler 2004:19).

On the other hand, SADF's primary function was to support a minority, racially-based regime that denied the majority the freedoms that they enjoyed such as political, economic, and social equality. As such, SADF was often pitted against Black South Africans and as an instrument of coercion and destruction against neighbouring states. “It received huge allocations of the national budget in order to engage in wars in Namibia and Angola, not to mention numerous small-scale activities. The SADF was itself a discriminatory organisation in which blacks and other disadvantaged groups (including women) served in marginalised capacity” (Kynoch 1996:445).

The SADF and MK armies reflect all the numerous differences between a conventional and a guerrilla army. However, in both armies there are significant similarities in the position of women. In both there was a progressive incorporation of women, and in both armies women were for the most part excluded from combat roles. Finally, in both armies women had diminished roles of leadership and authority. According to research done by Cock 1991, “there have only been two women who have reached the rank of brigadier in the SADF, there are no women generals and only ten women colonels (out of at least 600). In the ANC until

1991 there were only three women on the National Executive Committee and only one woman in a formally acknowledged leadership position within MK - the head of communications, Jacqueline Molefe (Sedibe) appointed in 1983 when her husband, Joe Modise became commander of the new MK headquarters” (Cock 1991:155).

This under-representation can be linked to the idea that in both armies women were excluded from combat roles. In the SADF there was a rigid sexual division of labour, both in training and deployment. Women volunteers were trained at the South African Army Women's College established in George in 1971 by PW Botha. Trainees were known as "Botha babies". Social constructions of femininity were reinforced in this institution and this is seen by the running ideology that those who were recruited were “girls who could present the image of women in uniform positively” as indicated by a SADF female officer in an interview done by Jacklyn Cock in¹² 1994. In addition, “instruction in the use of cosmetics is an important part of the curriculum.” In essence the army was not interested in creating butch women or tomboys or even for that matter combat military female personnel, and so there was no contention between the traditional conception of "femininity" and serving in the SADF.

Political education was something that ran through the fibres of both institutions, but of course for different reasons. While the SADF operated to defend the status quo and thus to maintain both white and male supremacy, MK operated as freedom fighters, as an army of liberation with the question of women's liberation on the agenda. The issue of women's emancipation figured explicitly in political education within MK, though according to one male MK informant, "most of the guys didn't take it very seriously" (Cock 1991:168).

White Women's Burden?

In as much as women were a minority in the MK, there was also an even smaller group of White Women who joined the organization. This of course was not readily acceptable to the majority of the White people in the country at the time, and as earlier illustrated by some black women who thought that these women had come to steal their men. As a result, different tactless rationales were provided in order to explain this phenomenon. Betty Welz (1998) was only able to identify seven White women who admitted to being MK cadres, five of whom were made public due to their capture by the South African security forces. And in her contribution towards explaining the position of white women's input to both the liberation war and to feminism in South Africa, she highlights what I term the “white woman's burden”. This is an icy slippery platform where because of these women's different ideologies from the hegemonic norm they were considered social outcasts. They were

¹²¹² Most women interviewed by Jacklyn Cock decided to remain anonymous

exemplified by the dominant White male hegemony in supplying evidence for how White women were supposed to have a particular feminine identity that did not include surrounding themselves with the enemy.

One of the reasons supplied by Welz (1998) for the lack of white women who joined MK, (which at that point in history was considered very much a terrorist group), is based in sociological rationale as is illustrated when unpacking the loaded term “terrorism”. This is explained as, “the acts of extralegal violence used intentionally by sub-national groups, principally as part of domestic or transnational revolutionary strategy” (Welz 1998:287). This indicates that it is not easy to go against the general consensus of a community, if so one is regarded as part of a counter-culture, that goes against what white women at the time had been socialize to do.

This is feeling demonstrated by arguments supplied by Hassel¹³, an American FBI agent in 1977. He remarked that “some of the terrorists...are the sons and daughters of the privileged who have benefited most from the very society they wish to disrupt.” (Welz 1998:288)

However, this does not explain what would cause these and other members of the White middle-class to in essence, declare war on the very society that took care of them by joining the Black majority, and engaging in violence against the very source of their affluence.

It is argued that revolutionary rhetoric has an obvious appeal to those few women who thought that there was no other option than to resort to violence and terror, thus ascribing to the “terrorists’ mystique”. This ascription seemingly involves and is built by crude outbursts of radical feminism, a sense of escapism from the mundane middle-class experience, and a more psychological contribution. This is especially illustrated in how the community at that time regarded these women as sexually deviant, social castoffs, stunted in emotional maturity. These conditions were further exacerbated by implying that their physique was probably unattractive to the opposite sex. “*Radical women almost by definition are seen as having sexual hang-ups; radical men are radical men.*” (Welz 1998:291) Name-calling was used as a weapon to discredit their impact and to deter those who would have wanted to join mainly by insulting the core stereotype of feminine identity and making these women seem so abnormal. These women had betrayed their gender and they needed to be publicly chastised for failing to live up to that ideal. The following is an example of the rational used to belittle them, and simultaneously attack the value of the feminist movement:

“What other occupation, especially in the work-a-day world of middle-class society, offers such adventure, fame, and prestige for the idealistic, immature university drop-out without the drudgery of study, work, and long years of apprenticeship

¹³ Quoted by B. Welz (1998) from Alexander, Yonah, ed., *International Terrorism*. New York: Prager 1976

necessary to achieve success on the stodgy professional ladder...the participation of women appears in these movements to be an aberrant extension of the legitimate striving of women, as represented by the feminist movement, to break out of the narrow, structural roles which they have been unfairly forced over centuries...the activities of the women are sexual hang ups about men or unresolved Oedipal complexes concerning their fathers” (Welz 1998:148-152).

White women in MK were treated by academics as prime examples of traitors to race, class and gender. The best illustration for this attitude was Marion Sparg; the first white female MK operative brought to trial in 1986 for treason and received 25 years imprisonment. The judge said:

You are a mature and intelligent woman, 28 years old. You have no previous convictions, you suffered no particular hardship in your life and you have deliberately chosen...to align yourself against the law and order in this country and to espouse the cause of an organisation committed to overthrow the lawful Government of the Republic of South Africa by revolution and acts of terrorism. You may choose to call it acts of war...You are a dedicated and unrepentant member of Umkhonto We Sizwe, the armed section of the ANC. You are dedicated to Marxism and revolution. If a black South African were in your position his or her acts could be understood, although not excused.”

Marion Sparg was painted as a failure, “with tortured mind...frustrated...weight problem...haunted...consumed by her desperate loneliness...rejected.” (Welz 1998:291)

Challenges of Being in the Armed Forces

The woman terrorist seems to offer challenge to the contemporary stereotype of the woman as a caregiver and protector and the notion of the violent women seems to give rise to both horror and fantasy for Western men...and clearly reflects upon our most deep seated prejudices about gender appropriate behaviour, especially with regard to fighting and aggression. (Taylor 1978)

The challenges faced by women in the MK and in SADF were both general and idiosyncratic to each institution. Much of the data regarding the challenges is evidenced through testimonies given by very few women who acknowledged their participation in MK.

The men and women of the MK slept in the same camps and did the same training activities such as map reading exercises, drilling and handling weapons. However some women felt excluded from the male camaraderie that was experienced. Katileho Moloi reported that “you could see some of the things that you’re not involved in. It’s only men, who stand there whispering. And then they’re gone; and you start asking yourself, “Why am I being left out?”” (Cock 1991: 151). Added to that, the gender stereotypes did remain regardless of the fact that women had undergone the same training. Thenjiwe Mtintso, a commander in the MK admitted that women were treated differently, according to her it was a result of women not staying long enough to move up the chain of command, “You have to spend time in the

camps to build up experience and expertise in order to go high up the ladder” (interview with Devan Pillay 1992)

Sexual Harassment

The crucial question is whether the experience of shared training in MK eroded the traditional gender stereotypes. The issue of sexual harassment would appear to be one way of testing the extent to which men's attitudes changed regarding women as sexual objects or cadres, and also the extent to which women themselves raised the issue. Widely different answers emerged on the issue of sexual harassment within MK. The general pattern in testimonies was to deny this, but according to one document as highlighted by Jacklyn Cock (1991-1994): "invariably all women were 'proposed' to on a daily basis". Most of us know cases of male comrades who have even raped or attempted rape of women and have not been disciplined". (Interview with MK cadre)

The litmus test of sexual harassment being present in the army camps also illustrates a socio-political minefield of how women's sexual rights competed with that of national liberation. What is implied as a result of women denying that sexual harassment occurred can be interpreted as how women at that point in South Africa's history viewed their personal politics against those of national liberation. A selflessness which women in society are still expected to perform. At this point let me emphasise that it is the *attitude of selflessness*, and not sexual violence that could have various interpretations from different feminist discourses in Africa. Within African and African feminism and Motherisms there is an implied historically narrative of a deliberate self-construction by Black women to have had an attitude of selflessness. This attitude is often pitted against that of Western feminists who are viewed to be selfish in their desires, attitudes and daily practices when trying to obtain equality with men.

Furthermore the issue of sexual harassment within the MK or within SADF did not feature as testimonies in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, therefore the history and continuation of the injustice lives on as it was not discussed or rather testified against. National liberation had been achieved and now those who had committed crimes needed to be brought to book, yet no woman said anything. “ Few Umkhonto we Sizwe (MK) cadres or underground activists, aside from those who applied for amnesty, made statements to the Commission” (TRC Report Vol. 5 Chapter 6 1998:199)

However, in the conventional army of the SADF where women's subordination and subservience to men was generally unchallenged, the role of women seems to have been

extended rather than fundamentally reworked. Traits of feminism were selected and celebrated while others were rejected. Therefore, it is not incorrect to state SADF did not view female cadres fully as feminists, instead they were under the auspices of nation building and ensuring that the government of the day remained in power. They were strong powerful super women who excelled in the domestic realm and also served their country.

Sexism in MK Camps

How sexism was interpreted, and in some cases justified in the camps in another test to see how both men and women understood and validated their roles in MK. The following quotations taken from Jacklyn Cock's 1991 paper illustrates the reactions the women cadres had to the insidious presence of sexism.

"There was some sexism in the camps. It mostly came out of a kind of protectionism. The men tried to protect us from long stretches of guard duty for instance" (Interview with MK woman 1991).

Another said: "The men cadres were very protective. The men's protective attitude pushed me. MK men expected women to be docile and subservient" (Interview with MK woman 1989).

It seems that sexism, through these testimonies is put under the guise or rather construed as "protection", the question then remains as to how this is problematic. It is problematic as it implies some pardoning for this behaviour. Moreover, if an issue is pardoned how much further can it be challenged or the behaviour changed? Secondly, if sexism became a motivating factor as illustrated in the second quote, then it was a necessary, albeit distasteful training tool. If sexism is interpreted as a displaced and inappropriate moment of chivalry as implied by the first quote, then the question is how far can socialization and expected norms of male and female interrelations be suspended in military institutions? This of course is working on the assumption that the men were not undermining the capabilities the women had in performing guard duty.

Sexism also appeared in a situation where the result of male and female sexual interaction, "resulted in pregnancy. [This situation] tended to lead to the woman's political activities being prejudiced more severely than that of the man, with her generally being sent to Tanzania" (Suttner 2007:242). The action of women being removed from the camps can lead to two conclusions. Firstly, there is an assumption that sexual relations were done with consent. It is understandable that if there was a prevalence of sexual harassment, then in its most extreme result would lead to rape or sexual assault. However, mutual consent is partly supported by the fact that there is neither data presented nor testimonies from the TRC about women who got pregnant as a result of rape from the male cadres.

The ideological implication of rape and abuse of women would reveal a contamination of the anti-apartheid struggle by the structures against which it set itself. "In the milieu of suspicion fostered by apartheid counterintelligence, the liberation movement [would have] internally replicated the procedures of the apartheid state while offering women cadres a curtailed liberation." (Samuelson 2007:835) In this light again selflessness has prevailed in maintaining the mystique and the credibility of MK and inherently the ANC.

Equality and its Illusions.

The relationship between men and women in the MK is not a simple issue of looking at respect and disrespect and expecting an average result. The issue is contentious and dynamic, as will be illustrated by the examples and testimonies provided. These testimonies can form arguments quite conclusively for the occurrence of both gender oppression and equality within the ranks of the MK and SANDF. The experiences of women who managed to obtain upward mobility are unsurprisingly a different view of the relationship to those who did not. The views of these women would reflect an attitude which cannot be put under the umbrella of a united female front as is often implied through by generalized narratives of camaraderie.

During the prior decades, the conflict between the apartheid state and anti-apartheid activists reached civil war proportions, and "militarized constructions of masculinity and femininity became more pronounced" (Goldblatt and Meintjes 1998:31). Yet, South African women entered and were absorbed into the war effort on both sides of the conflict and in various arenas. In both SADF and the liberation armies like MK, women took up the divergent roles of idealized warriors and dedicated supporters. While MK was sometimes dismissed as a "phantom army" its ideological presence among the masses was considerable and individual MK soldiers were heroized. The female MK guerrilla had also become a popular mass image of the strong, liberated woman.

Women soldiers in MK and SADF described themselves first and foremost as patriots. In the case of MK the notion of "patriotism" was more emotionally charged. Many were incited by anger over the police shootings of Soweto 1976 or anger about their own lives and material deprivation. Being part of the MK required a social sacrifice as many of the MK spies and cadres were the children of domestic workers who related that they saw little of their mothers who were required to live at their place of work and were not allowed visitors. In

their minds the institution of domestic service served as a model of the inequality on which the entire society was structured.

On the whole women's reasons for joining either of the two armies are vastly different, though notions of "patriotism" enter into both sets of ideological motivations. Certainly for many women joining the SADF, the opportunities for "career" training are important. While the SADF offered social mobility and the opportunity of individual advancement - particularly for Afrikaner girls - MK demanded the sacrifice of exile and a life of hardship and danger.

Jackie Molefe ¹⁴an MK Commander believed that the integration of women in armies was a crucial means of achieving gender equality.

“In the army people come to respect each other. It's only in the army that I've seen equality practised. In terms of endurance and discipline women have been outstanding in MK. Because of that, because of what we've been doing on the ground we've been recognised as equals.” (Interview 1990 Cock: 1991)

However, MK training may be the only social space in which this recognition of equality is a reality.

As earlier mentioned regarding physical training, both men and women received similar exercises in the liberation army, yet the majority of those engaged in support activities “such as reconnaissance, moving supplies and arms, nursing and telecommunications were women.” This could not have been a sign of women’s lack of military ability. According to Molefe MK women soldiers “really excelled in training” They were stronger than men in keeping endurance and discipline (Cock 1991:163). Women were also considered excellent cover for covert operations because they could be inconspicuous – (initially of course) therefore not arouse the suspicions of the enemy. In MK women guerrillas became known as the “knitting needles guerrillas” because they were operating underground, in reconnaissance, trying to look as ordinary as possible, carrying handbags in which knitting needles were visible (Cock 1991:151).

Some may argue that the character of the struggle which led to the break down of normal male female roles encouraged many women the opportunity for self-enhancement, something that would have otherwise taken decades to happen. Women realised that the struggle strengthened and toughened them, regardless of their limited education. Inherently they knew that they would never have been given that chance. However, to interpret the liberation struggle as the vehicle for women’s emancipation in South Africa may not bode

¹⁴ Chief of Communications: Jackie Molefe (1983 - 1992) retrieved July 8 2009
<http://www.anc.org.za/ancdocs/misc/trc2a.html>

well with African/a feminists, particularly if they are of the view that historically women had already been in a position of power and it is colonization that was the cause of their oppression.

In turn, the relationship women had with men in the MK was often praised by the women. Men were seen to respect and be in partnership with the women because they had been in the proverbial trenches together. This boosted some of the female cadres' morale.

The male comrades respected us for having the courage to be soldiers. (Interview with MK woman cadre, 1989)

Cadres forgot that you are a woman! They see you as a soldier. We used to go on three day marches together during which time we'd only eat condensed milk and water. The fact that we could endure these conditions earned men's respect and gave us women confidence. (Interview with MK woman cadre, 1990)

However, the exclusion of women from combat may be significant given that the experience and tradition of actual combat with the enemy is an important ingredient in MK's prestige. It also meant that no women participated directly in any of the famous MK actions that are now the subject of township myth. It is contentious because in South Africa black women in the townships have provided much of the infrastructure of resistance. Apart from being directly incorporated into MK, women have acted as couriers, provided intelligence and given refuge. Through rent and consumer boycotts it was often these women in the townships who gave resistance its mass character.

This respect and support from the men seemed to be conditional because of the gender stereotypes; women were not made to do certain things. They were called "umzana", which is a derogatory 'pet name' meaning 'delicate thing'. So women were often removed from the camps in order to do secretarial work in military headquarters. (Pillay 1992:18)

After training most women went into secretarial roles. They "got stuck in offices." Many of the testimonies prove that most of the women felt angry about this. "We felt women should be used in combat. Women are protected. The Boers were looking for men. (Interview with MK woman cadre 1991) Therefore not using women was viewed as bad strategy and gender oppression.

Gender stereotypical deployment patterns such as those discussed above would suggest that the gender equality which so many of the combatants had felt during the struggle remained divided. For Thenjiwe Mtinso, "armies and war tend to be the monopolies of men" by definition. For her women were merely absorbed into the status quo: "You are made into a man. It is probably the type and form gender oppression takes that is different from day to

day because of the structure of the army. It does not allow for differentiation.” But in the end, female soldiers were “women” and male soldiers were simply “soldiers” (Cock 1994:159-160).

Moreover, whatever the number of women soldiers, none of the liberation armies admitted women into higher command structures. Within MK only one woman ever managed to be appointed to military headquarters: Jacqueline Molefe was appointed Chief of Communications in 1983, because in her own words, “I was the longest serving person in the communications department. According to a former woman Commander-In-Chief;

In terms of the forward areas where you had the military mandate and structures, it is only as late as 1983 that we have begun to have women. But I can count them and I cannot reach five. I also know that on the command structures I served in I was the only woman. There were woman combatants at the lower levels; where as in the command structures nothing.

(Geisler 2004:52)

Self Oppression in MK

Devan Pillay (1992) asked Thenjiwe Mtinso to what extent women responsible for their own marginalisation. This question challenges the role of agency that the women in MK had regardless of the fact that they were in the minority and equally trained, Mtinso replied that:

“Many women saw themselves as delicate flowers, who were not supposed to endure all the rigours of camp life. So they tried to get through as quickly as possible. This is partly related to women getting pregnant. There [were] no child caring facilities at the camp as a result when a woman [got] pregnant she [was] removed. In addition, when women got married, most found it difficult to balance their revolutionary obligations and their social obligations...therefore women are not only victims of self marginalisation but also of socialization” (Pillay 1992:18).

A former commander in MK explained that “you found that when you finished training you were immediately sent to some kind of security or administrative work. It was through pushing that some of us got deployed in forward areas to do the military work or inside the country. It was not automatic.” That women were largely excluded from direct combat in MK was, according to Molefe, partly the women’s own fault, because “there was no formal ruling excluding women for combat. It was our fault. We didn’t put enough pressure. We often protested that we were excluded from selection and it was always women who were chosen for secretarial courses.”

This raises several points of contention. Through these cadres testimonies it seems that there was a social price that women had to pay in order to be part of the MK, particularly

concerning women's rights (predominantly regarding tier bodies) as juxtaposed to national liberation. The MK experience seems to be an example of women having to suppress elements of their socialized understandings of femininity in order to be acceptable and be treated equally. In other words, in order to be part of MK they have to be one of the 'guys' and adopt masculine behaviour. In as much as femininity is a social construction, so is masculinity. Suttner provides an explanation of the social construction of masculinity taken on by women. "Masculinity does not only have to do with men. From the woman who is simply assertive, strong and self-confident to the woman who explicitly identifies as butch, to defy the boundaries imposed by femininity is to be deemed 'masculine'...Excursions into 'masculinity' by women would not be socially frowned upon were they not recognised to be claims on social power (Suttner 2007:247).

In as much as there was collective action against oppression, individualistic goals and ideals were also a propeller for success in rank, and often required abandoning gender sensitivity. It is difficult to frame it within rhetoric as on one hand deliberative arguments to have women in MK were indeed unsuccessful, they were all filed out somehow, whether through pregnancy, or just being called lazy. However when pitted against expectations of a better democratic just South Africa, issues of representation became so pivotal women had to remain in the MK.

Feminism and the Military

"I am not going to advise women to turn their distaff into a musket though I sincerely wish to see the bayonet converted into a pruning hook". (Wollstonecraft, 1792:219).

In *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* (1792) Mary Wollstonecraft raised a question which several centuries later, is still quite justifiably challenging the notion of contemporary feminism. Even though Wollstonecraft argued for equal rights for women, she stressed that this did not imply their equal rights to bear arms. She assumed that the vocation of motherhood exempted women from bearing arms. This belief is of course is suspended by Black South African women who were at the brunt of an oppressive regime. It may be termed as reactionary, (given the temporal and geographical differences between Wollstonecraft's experiences and the South African liberation struggle) but it is apparent that African and Africana feminism would refuse to accept this discourse simply because they were part of the subjugated masses that Wollstonecraft was not a part of as a white woman. Perhaps the question that should be asked is what has feminism got to do with the right of protecting one's children or nation?

Even more so, in South Africa, the right to bear arms during the liberation struggle was motivated by the notion of motherhood. For example Thandi Modise - termed "the knitting needles guerrilla" said:

"I'm a guerrilla because I'm a mother. Some people have accused me of being an unnatural mother but I did it for her (her daughter). It's better to leave your child and fight. I'm very pleased my children will never turn around to me and ask, 'Why did you do nothing?' We have to have a better South Africa for our children. I do it for the children, all the children". (Interview 1991)

The reality is that during the 1900s to the present day, women have increasingly been incorporated into the armed forces worldwide. This trend is related to a number of factors such as changes in the nature of war because of different technologies and military organisation; decreasing birth rates in the developed world; increased labour force participation rates among women, changing attitudes about gender roles, and lastly, the women's liberation movement.

Thus it is understandable that many women in MK and SADF saw themselves as pioneers for women's and mothers' rights to break down formidable sexist barriers that had hindered women's participation in the armed forces. Furthermore, in South Africa it was done with male support and cooperation (albeit questionably). The liberation struggle in fact heightened in most instances the understanding of femininity to a 'super woman' status, a

woman who can perform her domestic duties at home and serve in the army as exemplified by the Afrikaner female cadres in SADF.

However, in the MK camps generally, while there was a strong commitment to equal rights as seen with the training, feminism was discredited. According to Mtintso (1992) within MK,

“There were no feminist positions argued because most soldiers (both men and women) viewed feminism in the negative sense, namely, that strand of feminism which sees men as the main enemy [Interpreted as White Western Feminism]. The word feminist had a derogatory meaning. Even now, it is not yet understood, not only in the ANC but also in Africa generally. There is no understanding that there are various trends in feminism. There is still no uniform understanding in the ANC Women's League of feminism and the content of women's emancipation. There is still talk of 'we as mothers and wives'. To me this is indicative of the problem.” (Pillay:1992:19)

The "problem" looms even larger when it comes to practice. According to another informant, "ANC men [understood] the emancipation of women theoretically but they [couldn't practice] it". (Interview 1991)

A distrust of "feminism" is often true for feminism as has already been argued by Africans and African feminists. For them, “Western women represent privileged, middle-class elite, fighting for sectarian aims, while women in national liberation struggles are fighting on behalf of their whole people.” (p. 12)

The notion of "equal rights for women" has had an important place in many national liberation struggles. This is true of the South African struggle and in this context "equal rights for women" was a revolutionary call. The rhetoric of revolutionary struggle in this context led to "revolutionary feminism" which is frequently militarist. In fact, the female soldier, the MK guerrilla, is a popular image of the strong, liberated woman. It asserts women have the equal right with men to take up arms against oppression and injustice.

Gender and Peace Building in New South Africa

Leaders within a conflict situation often resort to singling out gender specific traits based on an assumed common essence shared by all women or all men; an example of essentialism is applied to gender relations.

Peace activists utilise these essentialist characteristics of feminine and masculine identity. They draw from the symbolic power of “Mother” and “War Widow” to mobilise support for dialogue across ethnic and nationalist division. This strategy relies on stereotypes that men are equated with war and aggression and women are equated with peace and nurturing. This polarisation denies the diversity of experiences and opinions among women or men as

groups and limits the relevance of an essentialist argument. Symbols can also be co-opted for military purposes as was witnessed by Winnie Mandela dressed in Military Fatigues, yet she is the “mother of a Nation.”

The public sphere in Post-Apartheid South Africa is not an easily contested arena where women can speak and act freely. It is an arena that is affected by a multitude of conditions and ideologies that shape communities and democracies. This is why this paper will discuss the role of citizenry and its effects. The definition of citizenry and how that is experienced is also another arena that has to be looked at through a gendered perspective as suggested by Nira Yuval-Davies in her article ‘*Women, Citizenship and Difference*’ (1997). Citizenry is a state that is both active and passive respectively ‘whether the citizen is conceptualized as merely a subject of an absolute authority or as an active political agent’. (Yuval-Davies 1997:15)

Women over time have been able to move from being passive citizens, where even their right to vote was challenged, to being active citizens where they can partake in creating policy that helps govern the citizenry as shown by the examples above of the ANC Women’s League. This move has always and continues to be contested. Yuval-Davies uses T.H. Marshall’s (an influential theorist of citizenship in Britain) definition of citizenship as ‘a status bestowed on those who are full members of a community’. This is inclusive of civil, political and social rights and obligations. This enables us to do two things, firstly, link citizenship to membership in a community rather than to isolating it to just the state, as many definitions of citizenship do. Secondly, this aids in analysing the relationship between ‘the community’ and the state and how this affects people’s citizenship.

Yuval’s argument is that this definition enables us analytically to discuss citizenship as a multi-tier construct, which applies to people’s membership in a variety of collectives. (Yuval-Davies 1997:5) Yuval-Davies uses the example of military participation and war to explain how the legitimacy of citizenry can be a gendered debate. If one connects the ideas of how one is sexed and the duties they are expected to perform as a result of this, it is easy to distinguish why women are not expected to participate in the military especially in combat. However, in the light of the pursuit equal citizenship, –some feminist organisations such as NOW in the USA, ANMLAE in Nicaragua, have fought for the inclusion of women on equal footing to that of men in the military, arguing that once women share with men the ultimate citizens duty – to die for one’s country, they would be able to gain equal citizenship rights to those of men. The results of these campaigns got women to fight in the Gulf War. Yuval argues that example failed in many ways to create equal citizenry because in the first

instance, feminists have created pressure rather than advanced the rights of women, as women too have to leave their children to their mothers for them to be looked after. Secondly, being involved in the military does not automatically equate women and men, because even in this institution women are treated differently than men, and are also subject to issues such as sexual harassment and the negation of their reproductive rights. Finally, Yuval points out that this argument ignores the general social and political context of the military and its use (Yuval-Davies 1997:20).

This has links to the South African context, in that women were involved in the liberation movement both overtly and covertly in order to appeal to the nationalist concerns of the country at the time, and to also secure a future for themselves as active citizens, whose rights and concerns were legitimate. The debates that surrounded women's issues' around the time of heated nationalist struggle I argue were one of the first steps made in asserting that the new government, was a government that catered to the needs of all of its citizenry and all the issues presented before it were important. These arguments were anticipatory strategies towards building future stability within the country. Unfortunately this was not the argument that was neither clearly present nor was it understood, as these papers will show.

The Struggle Continues!

With the end of apartheid also came the end of an MK era. MK was integrated together with other liberation armies into the now South African National Defence Force (SANDF). "By late 1998, MK could claim a reasonable representation within the new national defence force, especially in light of the fact that 12 000 of the originally anticipated 28 000 members remained within the organisation. The uniformed component of the SANDF consisted of 37 077 former SADF personnel (53%) 11 727 former MK personnel (16%) and 9 580 new SANDF personnel (13%)" (Williams 200:1)¹⁵. However, the end of apartheid and the integration of the armed forces did not necessarily symbolise the end of the struggle for women in the military. This is evidenced by many speeches and policy documents that seek to redress and challenge the gender imbalance that is experienced in the military. It is a pervasive issue of recruitment, upward mobility and retention of female cadres that SANDF still struggles with to the present day. or women to bear arms; thus painting a picture which

¹⁵ The South African History Society Military history Journal – Vol 11 No 5 "the Other Armies: A brief Historical Overview of Umkhonto We Sizwe (MK), 1961-1994" <http://samilitaryhistory.org/vol115rw.html>

gives the impression of women in South Africa slipping into a societal groove of gendered expectations that encourage women to not be subsumed into an institution like the military.

The previously 'obtained' rights, status and privileges attached by being in the army (guerrilla forces), jointly with their role as liberators have through time been strapped down and made inferior to social economic needs such as housing and education. These socio-economic needs are indicative of a developing nation and have now (quite necessarily) come to the forefront in a free and democratic country. Unfortunately, the women's agenda for equal rights and political leverage have also categorically taken a back seat regardless of the attempts by government, women's organisations and the private sector to integrate gender inequality into the everyday lexicon of change. Some feminists on the side of African disposition may argue that this marginalisation is a result of inheriting oppressive habits of the historically sexist, white male hegemony which took away women's power.

The elite (new Black elite) who are politically strong and economically powerful still hold power over a much larger poorer disenfranchised community. Racism may have been taken away a governing principle, but economic and some socio-political injustices from apartheid era still live on. The elite White few have simply been replaced or are in addition to those who were the politically elite Black few, but the method of operation remains the same. This category of people is still predominantly male and the systems of governance still marginalise those who were deemed to be weaker and inferior i.e. women and children. Furthermore, even those who have managed to replace physically the oppressive white 'official', 'baas' etc, whether through policy reform, (like Gender Equity, Affirmative Action) or being in the hereditary line of opportunity, have not managed to reform many of the institutions or the market, but have simply imitated the culture that was there before, so the injustices continue and often the victims are re-victimised by a new so called liberal, equal opportunity dispensation. "They [the ANC] suggest that one of the reasons for consciously glossing over certain contentious issues is the desire to draw upon the infrastructure and skills of the previous regime for the benefit of the future" (Van der Walt et al 2003:252).

The Truth About Testimony

In interpreting and valuing the testimonies given by the women in MK to Jacklyn Cock and others, one can draw parallels and similarities in terms of how testimonies in the TRC served a function of creating a visual of the historic truth that was denied as a result of the apartheid regime's discriminatory policy. However, MK testimonies in this instance have a function of unravelling the mysterious prestige MK had built, and situates women in a reality that was never told to a large population. The mystery in this case is still upheld as many do not really know the intricacies of what happened at the camps, particularly between men and women.

The act of testifying to ascertain truth regardless of the forum or platform or text does serve a cathartic function for those involved and have the potential to change or influence policy reform regarding women in the military. I would argue that these interviews are details that were glaring left out by the TRC process and report, but just because they are not part and parcel of that event their value must not be discredited in terms of how they have impacted change in policy and reform in the military.

It is argued that the main pathway to justice is through truth telling. However, if the “truth”, is one of the fundamentals that lead to justice, there needs to be an understanding what “truth” entails. Richard Wilson (2001) explains the four notions and functions of truth.

1. *Factual or Forensic Truth*: is ‘the familiar legal or scientific notion of bringing to light factual, corroborated evidence’. This category includes individual incidents, as well as context, causes and patterns of violation.
2. *Personal or Narrative truth*: refers to the individual truths of victims and perpetrators, attaching value to oral tradition and story-telling. Healing often takes place as narrative truth is recounted.
3. *Social Truth*: is established through interaction, discussion and debate. Social truth acknowledges the importance of transparency and participation and affirms the dignity of human beings.
4. *Healing and Restorative Truth*: repairs the damage done in the past and prevents further recurrences in the future. The dignity of victims is restored by acknowledging their pain.

It appears that narrative, social and healing truths were used in the interviews and the function besides highlighting a silenced history these testimonies in fact helped a nation unpack a shameful apartheid past that involved the shameful politics within black oppressed organisations. The interviews serve to highlight an irony about this organisation which had built itself on ideas and practices that were supposed to be the polar opposite of the oppressive regime - women were to be treated with respect and equality. These testimonies also contributed to the building of a democratic future as will be illustrated by the White Paper document on Defence in 1996. The results that the research done by Cock and others helps the public understand how African women treated each other and how they were treated by men. Finally, it indicates how they would like to be seen by the rest of the world, and how they would like to be treated in the future.

The ‘truth’ that the research was built on was not subject to *jurisprudence*, some of the respondents have indicated violations that had happened to others, based on secondary

accounts of the events. Furthermore, the evidence was not tested, neither was it intended to be. They were not even required to attest under oath, but would make it clear that they would speak the truth as they saw it, a retelling of their experience through a personal standpoint.

The shortcomings of gender diversity have been documented by a White Paper on Defence done in 1996 regarding equal opportunity and affirmative action:

“35. The integration of forces has substantially altered the composition of the Defence Force. For historical reasons, however, the SANDF does not yet reflect the demographic composition of South Africa.

36. In order to secure the legitimacy of the armed forces, the DOD (Department of Defence) is committed to the goal of overcoming the legacy of racial and gender discrimination. It will ensure that the SANDF and its leadership in particular, is broadly representative of the South African population.

37. The DOD acknowledges the right of women to serve in all ranks and positions, including combat roles.

39. The emphasis of the program will be on the education, training and development of black officers, service women and other previously disadvantaged personnel. Appropriate strategies in this regard will include special education and training courses, career development plans, and reorientation of recruitment and promotion systems.

40. The programme will also seek to eliminate and identify discriminatory practices and attitudes in the Defence Force. This is both constitutional imperative and a matter of ‘combat readinesses. The SANDF will not perform its functions effectively if capable people are excluded from both senior posts because of prejudice, or if these tendencies undermine cohesion and morale.

Chapter 6 Human Resource Issues White Paper on Department of Defence J Modise¹⁶ (1996)

From this evidence it is easier to understand how and why in Post-Apartheid South Africa women are increasingly forming human rights organisations, and there are several that have taken up the challenge of retraining the police, judiciary and other institutions to contest the discrimination, culture and practices that are so deeply entrenched in the institutions of law and order. Through these exercises women seem to engender a transformative way of discussing rape and other human rights violations, similar to that of the TRC within the community and to some limited success within the institutions. The new burst of organisations that are community level based and consultative help solidify the perspective that women are actively peace and nation building as the victims of marginalisation.

¹⁶ Was the Minister of Defence and was the First Chief of Staff in Umkhonto We Sizwe. He married Jackie Sedibe, former MK chief of communications and first SANDF female general. http://www.anc.org.za/people/modise_j.html and http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Johannes_Modise retrieved 8 July 2009.

These articles as stipulated by the White Paper on Defence acknowledge the past and the unequal distribution of power and resources regarding military training and upward mobility. It also acknowledges women have the right to participate in combat roles and to be represented in leadership positions. On paper at least, in 1996, the promise of an effort to be representative was made, yet in 2000 (until present day) the plea for women to be more represented in the armed forces still raged on.

In a statement by the Deputy Minister of Defence in 2000 at the National Assembly, she noted that:

“...transformation goes beyond numbers. We want to ensure that democratic values are entrenched in every aspect of our work. The Civic Education Programme will become a core part of all training and will include transforming the cultures of the SANDF so that it reflects the values of justice, peace, democracy and development, as well as the diverse spectrum of its membership...”

While the majority of the privates and corporals in the SANDF are black, the middle layer remains predominantly white and male. To correct this we have identified the need to recruit more blacks and women into the Navy and the Air Force and to invest in targeted training of black students and soldiers to enter and advance in these highly technical arms of service.”

Deputy Minister of Defence, Ms Madlala-Routledge, National Assembly, 7 April 2000

Perhaps this situation can be attributed to a paradigm shift in thinking when regarding the military that has not infused into the rest of society. I would argue that the view of the military as a career as opposed to being a nationalist/patriotic front as was propagated during the struggle is a mindset that many have not yet accepted. It is possible that there is a major deficit of information, debate and interest generated by the military and media platforms regarding the recruitment and retention of women in the military. To be blunt, it is a none issue in the public agenda. In addition, too few civilian women's organisations in South Africa support the cause of women in the military. A passive attitude can only speak when directly assaulted, and these aforementioned organisations have not assaulted the topic.

Simply put if the motivation for joining the army has been removed a new motivations have to be created particularly in a country where the army reserves rely on volunteerism for recruitment and not conscription. The White Paper on Defence directly stipulates that SANDF will be an all volunteer force.

“9. For political, strategic and economic reasons, the SANDF will be an all volunteer force. It will comprise a relatively small Regular Force, including a civilian component, which is backed up by a sufficiently large Part-Time Force. The regular component has different categories of employment, including a flexible term service system for uniformed members.” May 1996 White Paper on Department of Defence J Modise.

The justification behind this was because conscription was interpreted to be divisive, discriminatory, costly and contrary to the new Constitution. Therefore it becomes apparent that the relationship between citizens and the armed forces has to be revisited in order to encourage women to join in the absence of conscription. In addition cultural rationales for discouraging women to join have to lose ground, and more instrumental approaches are now a necessity. The incentives then created must then also be enough to retain women in the military. These can include family policy, mentoring programmes, and of course transparency and programs combating corruption and sexual harassment.

According to observations made by Carrerias (2002) who studied Women in the Portuguese army, she argues that “Women do not see the armed forces as another employer, but rather are attracted by each unique characteristics of the military such as discipline and adventure...the opportunity for travel and the feeling of being different were amongst the most important motivators for enlistment. The search for structured environment and organised life as well as to escape the routine of domestic life...the possibility of participation in a prestigious institution and pursuing a career that has for all intents and purposes been traditionally closed to women” (Carrerias 2002:704). In South Africa, not any of these elements have been discussed conclusively in the public sphere and so it would be easy to come the conclusion that on paper the military does want women to join, however the reality is that it has failed in implementation and outcome to represent this view.

Conclusion

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This paper was divided into three sections, one of understanding the impact, and challenges of feminism in Africa, the second was to unpack the history of the armed forces in relation to feminism in Africa, and the final point, was to see whether or not the battles of both feminism and women in the military faced have resulted in any justice that can be seen through policy reform and gender equality in the new democratic dispensation.

With regards to the first point of research I will conclude by explaining that gender analysis, was a strategic course to understanding feminist philosophies presented by African Feminism, Western Feminism and Africana Womanism. As an aside I would argue that gender analysis is so often accused of being a toned down, palpable persuasion tool for men to acknowledge the validity of the research. However, I interpret this route/movement as an enabler for feminist theorists to move from a position of defence to a position of authority in actively creating foundations for argument and for those in the field of Rhetoric to be able to objectively critique the value of feminist arguments. For instance, feminist epistemology argues that dominant knowledge practices disadvantage women by... “(1) Excluding them from inquiry,

(2) Denying them epistemic authority,

(3) Denigrating their “feminine” cognitive styles and modes of knowledge,

(4) Producing theories of women that represent them as inferior, deviant, or significant only in the ways they serve male interests,

(5) Producing theories of social phenomena that render women's activities and interests, or gendered power relations, invisible, and

(6) Producing knowledge (science and technology) that is not useful for people in subordinate positions or that reinforces gender and other social hierarchies.” (Anderson 2007:1). These points are what I would determine as the points of defence. Women particularly in Africa, having experienced various forms of subordination now choose to empower themselves with a methodology that seeks to rectify the societal imbalances thereby moving them to a position of authority and power by creating new epistemologies.

Feminist epistemology challenges who the deemed “knower” of this knowledge is - is it a woman or a man? And as n this case is it a Black woman or White woman?

Feminist epistemology also attacks the legitimacy of this knowledge in terms of what/whose experiences, observations, tests/beliefs must pass in order for knowledge to become common knowledge. If we can understand that the central concept of feminist epistemology, as Anderson points out, relies on the concept of a “situated knower” therefore logically leading to a “situated knowledge”. It is this knowledge that reflects the particular

perspectives of the subject. (Anderson 2007). The primary concern was then how one's gender and race positions the "knowing subjects".

In order to deal with this dilemma, feminist epistemology has a particular way of "situating the knowing subject". This is through "feminist standpoint theory." This is the tool that this dissertation has used in order to unpack the following theories African Feminism, Africana Womanism, Motherism and Western Feminism.

As I pointed out earlier, my research rested in understanding women in communicative spaces and the challenges they face and how they deal with them. I would like to argue that Feminist Standpoint Theory can in many ways validated the experience of women who served in the Military group MK and now in the military. I argued how their marginalisation in these particular institutions opened up doors of exploration as to how women are positioned as nation builders and citizens in South Africa.

For this paper I isolated the deliberative arguments made by the different feminist epistemologies such as African Feminism, Africana Womanism, Motherism and Western Feminism and saw how these were expressed in literature, history and day to day interactions in society.

I would like to conclude my analysis of African feminism and Africana Womanism by adding that in as much as these discourses have legitimate premises and claims neither one can speak for all African women - particularly those of a younger generation who were not subjected to overt racial discrimination nor partake in the liberation struggle. It is this generation that is being asked to make an alliance with some form of discourse that aims to explain the intricacies of their existence. African Feminism, Africana Womanism or Western Feminisms are identities that I argue many young black South African women are grappling to understand in terms of how these discourses relate to **them**. There is an undefined category of young black people in South Africa who were born in an independent state and for much of their lives believed that racial classification was inconsequential to their upper-middle class upbringing, with co-ed multi-racial classmates.

The realities offered by a globalised world have impacted the shaping of identity for many young African men and women. There is a part of the generation that believes in equality for both men and women but do not want to be labelled feminists, and the term Womanism is hardly referred to in daily interaction that many would not readily identify with that discourse either.

Furthermore, because of the exposure to a diverse upbringing that put at the forefront racial equality many young black Africans do not feel threatened by white men or white women. It is in this realm that it can be observed that white women in Africa get more and more pushed into the margins of a voiceless minority and been largely ignored by the rest of society. My fail thought is that African feminism and Africana Womanism are discourse that cannot afford to stay static in definition or in premise as time goes by and has to incorporate more of the changing attitudes towards race and class in order for them to survive as identities for African women.

I also chose to focus on a particular historical event such the women joining the MK and SADF in order to highlight some of the arguments that went into creating and challenging ideals of the new democratic dispensation regarding women in the military and how the history of feminism in Africa has contributed to this status. I then assessed the current status of women in the South African armed forces to see if these ideals have been lived up to and how they failed by analysing the arguments and stories that were presented by women who were political activists in South Africa. I question how where they denied or given credibility and dignity by the processes and outcomes of the research done mostly contributed by Jacklyn Cock. Finally, I critiqued current gender policy by looking at the White Paper on Defence and a few speeches done by Ministers of Defence over time since the Independence of South Africa. I questioned if the notions of transformative justice within the military, the economic or in the social-political paradigm had occurred.

This was achieved by assessing what the role 'truth' of the former cadres testimonies really played pitted against the outcome that was anticipated as a result of the White paper on Defence. Simply put, I asked whether or not equality and justice had occurred for women in the military as a result of the picture painted by their testimonies, and through the historic role of women's liberation in South Africa.

To be clear I reaffirmed that justice was an institution, a sensibility, and a philosophy that all people have experienced and tried to qualify and quantify within the public sphere. It is also a concept that is tentatively approached especially by those whom have experienced war, discrimination and physical or emotional violations. Yet, its definition and experience is so vast and temporal. It is not uncommon for justice to be explained hand in hand as a form of compensation or retribution for the victims. It is also not uncommon for the result of 'justice' to be used as a deterrent; or rather an example, showing the rest of the on looking community how perpetrators must be held accountable for actions that deliberately hurt others. However, justice is also supposed to reform and enact a change, whether it be in attitudes or policy, a change must be noted that can divide the unpleasant experience of the

past to one of a promising future. I conclude by asserting that the apparent 'lack of will to change' or rather slow change has in many ways affected the rate of transformation in policy and in attitudes towards issues to do with gender, equality and the perception of the military.

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