

Rape shuts down our lives, our dreams our future. Rape takes away our freedom

Our society thrives on the oppression of women by sexual exploitation, violence and changing of nappies and grooming households. Women's labour at home is significant for the system of capitalism and profits to be entrenched.

Rape and other forms of violence are ways in which men keep women under control and powerless. Rape goes hand in hand with male domination and capitalism which is what our so called democracy has become.

Our writing and the stories of women in this report is one way we can reclaim our rightful position in society.

The concept of being a woman should not be detached from the one of being a human being.

The title of our report "But still We Rise" is taken from a poem by Maya Angelou. This poem reflects the way we feel about rape. Regardless of our oppression, we still rise.

This report, prepared by UPM activists, is a way of encouraging women to speak out, to break the silence as victims and to halt the negative stigma that survivors carry.

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With Our Stories We Arise

We talked with women who had experienced rape. We help them tell their stories here because we believe that, no matter how painful our experience is, if we tell our stories openly in the community, this is the first and a powerful step towards creating our own freedom.

"I was in Grade One"

She was 8 years old when this incident happened. She lived in our township. This incident took away her life.

"On my way from school with my friends, a guy approached us but we did not pay any attention to him. There were three of us and I was the only girl among us.

"The man pulled me by my school bag and there were no people in the road, we were walking alone in the road with no adults in the evening. He pulled me to the house that he come out of.

"My friends were powerless they ran to call my family, there was nobody to help us on the street. The man did not stop he continued pulling me I was not strong enough to fight him. He then took me to another house which was a little far from the one he come out of. He forced himself into me.

"I was young. I did not know what he was doing to me. After more than one hour he let me go. The time was around eight o'clock. I remember this because I heard the sound of a soapie playing on the television.

"As I walked home I could not walk properly. When I got home the house was full of my family members. As I walked in they all cried when they saw me. There was blood coming

out of me so they decided to call the ambulance as well as the police. We got to the hospital and they did what was needed to be done and told me I tested positive for HIV"

Due to what happened to this girl she did not cope very well at all. She did not understand why all of this was happening to her, why she was being punished like this, but she had to deal with all the trauma.

At school her fellow learners started teasing her about what had happened. Bear in mind she was in her first grade at school meaning she had to grow up with the stigma of what had happened to her. She then dropped out of school and started treating herself badly. She got drunk everyday and become a prostitute.

Her whole life, her future, her dreams were all shut down.

"They held me the whole night in the playground"

When I interviewed this young women, I saw her as a young girl who was a big dreamer but now her face was full of sadness because of what happened to her.

Her words did not have any hope As I looked at her I saw she did not care anymore.

"Me and my friends went to a tavern

that night. When we left the tavern my friends left me and went ahead. So I was trying to catch up with them. As I was walking I came across two guys. I passed them, I was scared, I never looked back when they passed me. Little did I know they were following me. I passed the local playground for children. I heard a whistle but I did not pay any attention to it. I then heard a voice saying I must wait for him, but I continued walking. I heard something hitting me on my head that's when I realized they were attacking me. I was in pain, my head was spinning. He then grabbed me pulling me to the ground. I do not know what happened, all I know was that later I was bleeding with my pants down by my legs. I estimated that the time was around six in the morning, meaning I spent the whole night there.

"I went to the police station and opened a case. The police took me to the doctor. All the necessary things were done. The police then took me home.

"Lucky I was able to identify those guys. They were arrested. The detectives visited my home regularly till the court date arrived. Those guys were sentenced to 10 years in prison without parole."

"If you have money you will win"

"I am a member of the community andiyithandi into yodlwengulo kuba ngosisi bethu nabantwana base-makhaya ababahlukunyezwayo ngamanye amadoda andicingi ukuba abantu benziwa sisinxilbo kuba abantu ababhinqileyo abanxibi zinto zimfunshane bonkoe abanye bahlwengulelwa ezindlini, abany-engamadoda abo abahlala nawo endlini, omnye ibangumalume,



okanye utata okanye umntakwabo. Nabo bangamaxhoba entselweni nakwindlela ezivela entselweni ewe abantu babangelwa kukungaphangeli nokusebenzisa iziyobisi abany kuba esuka etrongweni abe engaqali ukuhlwengula ngaske urhulumente aze ebantwini kuba asanelisekanga sisigwebo asinika abahlwenguli sithiphantsi nodlwengulo.

"Kubuhlungu ukubona umtu ebeka dlengule ehamba ngapandle nanini kuba kaloku umtheto uyabakupha abantu emvakweminyaka ibhe into kulomtu ulihlobha ingekapeli. Xoba elolipela lisela utywala, lisebenzisa ne drugs, elala naphina nanobanina.

"Urhulumente ngaske ayithatele inqaleleo indaba yodlwengulwa, kwezinye izinto simane sicinga urhulumente omhlope, ngelaxesha sasisaneliseka isigewbo. Ngoku ukuba ungumtu ongenanto intozako azihambi kakuhle, nasemtetweni ukuze zihambe kakuhle kufuneka ubesityebi, okanye waziwe ngosazi-

wayo emzantsi afrika. Ndithi masingahlaleni sisonge izandla masipakameni ngumbono wam lowo"

"He never talked about it"

I spoke to a woman whose nephew was raped by his friend and this is what she said:

"Kubuhlungu xa ulixhoba lodlwengulwa kuba uyafana nomntu ofileyo umntu akwenze into bungayifuni akunyanzele" and being raped by someone who is infected by HIV and rapes you without even using a condom.

"I have experienced rape in my own family where my nephew was raped by his male friend. He never talked to anyone or reported it at home, but we found out from his cousin who is my niece. She heard people talking about it on the street. I don't know maybe, he was scared and ashamed of talking about it because he is a boy.

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When I first heard about it I was angry, mostly angry at him, I don't know why, but I wanted to hit him. But I spoke to him and we reported the case to the police. Till today, the police have not arrested the boy who raped him. We did make a follow-up but we were not given a valid response from the police."

"It is my job as a wife to make my husband happy"

She was 38 years old and was married for five years with two children. She did not work and depended on her husband for income. One day her husband wanted sex, but she did not. Her husband forced himself on her. He raped her.

I asked her how she felt when this happened. She said, "A part of me felt removed from me but I also felt that as a wife I was doing my duty"

She went on: "Rape is a sensitive topic to talk about because a woman lives in fear of being judged by her community. I wish the community/society could change the way they react and act when it comes to rape.

"All I needed was my protector"

Any parent would do anything to protect their children. As a child you would feel safe, warm and loved in the arms of those who love you, but what happens when someone else destroys your safety at home...? This is the tragic story of the young person I interviewed.

"My childhood was fun. I would come back home from school, play with my friends. Home was safe as daddy would protect us from any harm. But now things have changed, we are taken for

granted. Akukho mnandi.

"After the death of my father, my sisters and me wanted more, it's like we wanted more safety.

"I remember that night when those guys broke into our house demanding money. One of those guys found me under the bed hiding, wanditsala and said, 'ndikfumene sfebendini'. He then started touching me. My mom and sisters were on the other room screaming and crying they were powerless. We were all powerless with no one to help us.

"Ever since then life changed. We felt powerless. Those guys were arrested and sentenced to ten years in prison but I still walk around with fear.

"Life is okay now, as much as my body was taken for granted and my dignity went down the drain, but yes I am okay."

"The guys who raped me walk around freely today"

I interviewed a woman who is 32-years-old. She was not happy to talk to me, she was not happy with how the justice system handled her case. She did make the following comments:

"I wish rape would stop, I wish nobody would harm anyone. I wish what happened to me would not happen to anyone else. My body was harmed forever."

"The police failed me. The guys who raped me walk freely today. The police told me that due to the lack of evidence, my case would be put on hold for now, meaning my docket was closed.

"Now when they see me, those guys, they call me names, especially when they are drunk. That makes me feel like I am now an outsider, as if I don't belong here. They are always on my case giving me ugly looks saying uncool things. I wish they would stop."

Still I Rise

You may write me down in history
With your bitter, twisted lies,
You may tread me in the very dirt
But still, like dust, I'll rise.

Does my sassiness upset you?
Why are you beset with gloom?
'Cause I walk like I've got oil wells
Pumping in my living room.

Just like moons and like suns,
With the certainty of tides,
Just like hopes springing high,
Still I'll rise.

Did you want to see me broken?
Bowed head and lowered eyes?
Shoulders falling down like teardrops.
Weakened by my soulful cries.

Does my haughtiness offend you?
Don't you take it awful hard
'Cause I laugh like I've got gold mines
Diggin' in my own back yard.

You may shoot me with your words,
You may cut me with your eyes,
You may kill me with your hatefulness,
But still, like air, I'll rise.

Does my sexiness upset you?
Does it come as a surprise
That I dance like I've got diamonds
At the meeting of my thighs?

Out of the huts of history's shame
I rise
Up from a past that's rooted in pain
I rise
I'm a black ocean, leaping and wide,
Welling and swelling I bear in the tide.
Leaving behind nights of terror and fear
I rise
Into a daybreak that's wondrously clear
I rise
Bringing the gifts that my ancestors gave,
I am the dream and the hope of the slave.
I rise
I rise
I rise.

— Maya Angelou

Sexual violence and rape are the heart of the rot in our society

We are living in a radically unjust society. We have all been damaged by centuries of oppression. Our society remains toxic and racist. At the same time capitalism entrenches the highly exploitative and exclusionary features of a sick society.

Because of the twin evils of racism and capitalism, black people are still synonymous with all the ills of our society. We live in shacks, we are dying of curable diseases, we are subjected to menial and precarious jobs that are viewed as decent jobs like Expanded Public Works “job opportunities”.

Black women bear the brunt of these ills of our society due to patriarchal nature of our society, that is imbued in both white supremacy and capitalism.

At the heart of the rot is sexual violence and rape against a black child, a black sister and a black mother. One in nine women are raped in their lives. A woman is raped in every 17 seconds. Rape

is a weapon of domination, power and repression. Women are seen through the lenses of patriarchy, before they are full human beings. Rape is a way of subordinating women to the power of men. White men rape just as black men rape and yet rape is seen as a black problem. In fact rape is a South African problem.

There is also an epidemic of violence against women. There are men in South Africa who claim to be revolutionaries and yet they abuse women. This is well known. It is time to break the silence. You cannot be a radical and abuse women.

Revolutionary politics does not only happen in the streets or in parliament. It begins in the home. Every true radical must make a full commitment to gender equality. This begins in the home. This commitment also needs to be made in the workplace and in our organizations.

— Ayanda Kota



I am not free

The say we live in a free country but as a woman I can say I am not free: Because the first thing that people see when they look at me is a woman and not a human being.

1. Because I was raised in my culture as a woman and not as a human being
2. Because I am treated differently from men.
3. Because the society I live in gets to tell me how to dress and what to do with my own body because I am a woman
4. Because someone out there thinks they have the right to abuse, rape and force themselves on me
5. They get to take away my dignity and my rights as a woman in my own country.

What is the cause of rape?

When are women at a risk?

What action should we take?

To stop rape we must understand the root causes. Then we must use this understanding to plan and take action . We asked women and men to say what they believed to be the causes rape and when are women at risk to rape.

- “Indlala yeyonanto ithi ibengunobangela yokuba kubekho abantu abangadlwenguli kwakunye nabantu abavela etrongweni abathe babhantinta iminyaka babuya etrongweni kuba umntu wagqibela kudala udibana nomntu ongumama afumane indlela ngokuthi adlwengule”

Often people released from prison are not welcomed in the community. They are isolated, they become angry and they force themselves on woman in this anger.

- **Stepfathers who don't care**
Sometimes it's stepfathers who rape their stepchildren because he doesn't care because the child is not even his.

- **Unemployed and dependant mothers afraid to report rape**

Unemployed women who are dependent on the step father who puts food on the table are afraid to report or even believe their children when they tell them they are being raped by the stepfather.

- **Sugar Daddies**
In some cases you find that children don't have parents and they have to find a way to survive and they turn to sugar daddies and they think that because this person provides for them then its his right to take advantage of their body”umzimba wakho ngowakhe angenza nantoni ayifunayo kuwo”.

- **Not talking to our kids about sex**

Not talking to our kids about sex is also a problem because you might think that your kids don't know anything but they have friends and the society also plays a huge role in a child's life.

- **Alcohol**

One of the major cause of rape is alcohol in which you will find that those rape cases happen in taverns or someone who was going home on her way back from a local shebeen.

- **Drugs**

Drugs have a huge impact on rape because “abantu abazisebenzisayo baye bangabi nangqondo yokucinga bacinga njengezilwanyana”

- **Employment and dignity**
if there is no employment there is more violence. When (especially man) are unemployed (bare in mind that we are always seen as providers)Then some how one loses the dignity and gets frustrated and then they reclaim that dignity by acting violent or dominant to others.

- **Womans dress is not a cause of rape**

One of the police I was talking to, stated that the way a woman dresses does not mean you will be raped or not.

Tell Perpetrators that Rape is taking a life

The law its self is not playing an important role teaching the perpetrators that when you rape you will

get big sentence because when you rape it is the same as taking someone's life and dignity.

Rape is a serious matter

Rape is a very serious matter whereby some victims of it feel like there's no way forward in recovering from what has happened.

Rape affects all young and old
From my conclusion, rape affects all of us whether you are young or old it does not matter anyone is at target.

The police handle rape badly.
in some cases you will find that a docket at the police station is closed due to lack of evidence or because police are bad at investigating or don't investigate seriously.

We need action in our Community

I think to me there is a lot to be done when it comes to rape because from being in a woman's forum and through the research I have seen that not much is done in terms of raising awareness and educating people about rape

The Law not playing and important role

We must fight the Stigma

Rape leaves the woman with a stigma in their community where they feel like they are not accepted within the society.

We must make the police and the courts work for those who are raped, not for rapists

The UPM team visited the local police station, the courts and met with lawyers. We wanted to know how the legal system. We struggled to get information from the police. They simply passed us on to someone else who passed us back to the police. We learnt from the lawyers that rape cases are very difficult. It is hard on the person raped, it is also difficult to get evidence. Often people lay charges and withdraw them later due to fear or they are embarrassed to face the community. The police have a good system to take care of people who are raped. Often due to uncaring individual police officers this system is not implemented. Here is some of the information we have collected.

Reporting

This is what should happen when a person enters the police station to open a rape case. This explanation was given to use when we interviewed a police officer

1. Make a Statement

You stand at the counter tell the police you are here to open a rape case, you are then taken to the "comfort room". A police woman should help you and should be by your side through the whole process to offer you support and make sure you are comfortable enough to talk. A statement is taken whereby in some cases if the person interrogating (preferable a woman) you is harsh the woman will be with you in every step of the way giving you support.

2. Hospital

Once the statement process is done, they call the hospital where there is a room only for rape victims to tell them they are coming, a police van but sometimes a private car is used to go to the hospital where as soon as you arrive you go straight to the room/ward for raped people, get an available doctor get the sexual kit which differs for adults and children.

Bear in mind that a police is always present when the rape kit is being done also it is the police that

closes the rape kit to ensure that no foul play was involved.

Pills are given to the victims to prevent pregnancy or anything else.

3. Safe house

The police will take you to a safe house if you feel you are not safe to go back to your home hence the suspect is a family member or is from around your location where in the safe house you can stay for three to five days while they find a better place or another relative to take you in. They buy you grocery and clothes if necessary.

4. Support organisations.

The police will work with the social welfare department, hospitals, justice offices and FAMSA to name few.

5. Counseling

Police are also trained to counsel a person who has suffered rape.

You can get your first counseling there but they can book you another one at the hospital with a psychologist.

Bail

What happens during the bail process?

Some people think that a person who has been accused of rape or domestic violence should not be

given bail. But being accused of a crime is not the same thing as being guilty of a crime.

What the judge considers in making a bail decision

- The judge or magistrate will consider the personal circumstances of the accused, the circumstances of the crime and other relevant information before making a decision about bail.
- The accused person should not be released on bail if there is evidence that he is likely to do any of these things:
 - Endanger the safety of the public or any particular person
 - Undermine public peace or security
 - Commit a serious offence
 - Try to influence or intimidate witnesses or conceal or destroy evidence.
- The accused person should not be released on bail if there is evidence that he will probably not attend court or follow the bail conditions.
- In cases of rape, the accused must convince the court that he should be released.
- In the most serious cases of rape, such as gang rape or the rape of a child, the accused must show there are exceptional circumstances why he should be released.

Support Groups

Support groups are available for survivors of rape to assist them in dealing with what has happened, giving them hope and boosting their self esteem.

These support groups help survivors move on with their lives regardless of what has happened.



Famsa

At FAMSAs I spoke to Zanele and she said:

“We give support to the victim by providing counseling for them and they are there to listen. However it is the person’s decision to say whether they want to go for counseling.. We know that being raped is a very sensitive issue and it is not easy to just talk. This is because most victims have the fear of being judged by society and by their families. When you have been raped the blame is somehow put on you as a woman and people ask you a lot of questions that make you feel that maybe you are the one to blame, you are the one who has done something wrong.”.

What sort of support do they give to the victim and to the family?

“We organise joint sessions with the family and the victim and they get to talk about the issue in front of each other in the presents of a counselor, asiye zindwendwele amakhaya abo ngaphandle koba ikhona into engxamisekileyo.”

What do you do as an organisation to make sure the person can continue with their life positively?

“Umntu siye simbuza ba biyintoni iminqweno yakhe ngaphambi kokuba ahlelwe sesisihlo, but the person must be committed to go forward not be something that will come from me or any other person but it must be something that comes from her because it’s her future. We are only there to give light and direction.”

Raphael Centre

The Raphael Centre deals with parents and kids who are infected by HIV/AIDS as well as rape survivors who were infected when they were raped.

They counsel survivors on HIV/AIDS and what happens when are infected with the virus and how to live a healthy life.

They give support:

- Because of the reaction of the community when a woman or girl is raped the center also trains the community about the virus because the people who are infected are from their community and at the same time they have to face the society everyday
- They provide training to survivors and their families to ensure families understand that once you are HIV positive you are still a human being and you deserve to be treated as such.
- They deal with different cultures and races.
- They counsel rape survivors on how to disclose their HIV status to their families.
- They follow up and do home visits.
- The centre also looks at what the person’s visions were for her future before she was raped and infected with HIV/AIDS and they provide training and skills to enable her to stand on her own.
- They teach children to know who should touch their bodies and on which parts. And why it is important to speak out.