



The cost of silence

The choices available to women of my age, and of my educational background, represent a significant move forward in gender relations over the last two decades, but as we mark women's month, it is clear that the progress has been complicated by the continuing reality of sexism.

While for millions of black women in this country, change has been far too slow, there is a growing elite for whom the sky – or at least the glass ceiling right before the sky – is the limit. In my daily life, I have kind of access to opportunities that my mother's generation could only have dreamed of: I drive, I vote, I travel, I do press interviews, I conduct strategy discussions, I deliberate, and most importantly, I lead.

But I saw a TED Talk by Facebook COO Sheryl Sandberg, called 'why we have too few women leaders', that reminded me of how far we still have to go. (http://www.ted.com/talks/sheryl_sandberg_why_we_have_too_few_women_leaders.html). Sandberg makes the point that there is a positive correlation between success and likeability for men, while there is a negative correlation between success and likeability for women.

Sandberg's comments about gender, management and likeability, reminded me of an important personal experience that I had quietly tucked away. I describe it as an ugly incident that took place in a beautiful Eastern European city.

About a year ago, on a work trip, I was sexually harassed. It happened in the way that women are routinely harassed every day in the corporate world. What was more interesting than the way in which I was harassed (it was verbal and was not as violent as many incidents that women live through on a daily basis but it was humiliating nonetheless), was my response to it: I did nothing.

I was at a reception, talking with a small group of men who are colleagues but with whom I am not in frequent contact. And seemingly out of nowhere, came seven spiteful words, clearly intended to cut me down to size. "Can't you see that she's a woman?" It was said with a sneer and was intended as a 'joke.' It made everyone except the aggressor, uncomfortable, and it had its desired effect: I was particularly embarrassed, although I had done nothing to be ashamed of.

The fact that I am a woman, was being pointed out by an obnoxious man, to a bigger group of men, in order to say, 'look at her as an object. We are off-duty now, we are not colleagues, we are men, and she is a woman.' It was clearly done to put me in my place and it worked. I felt sick.

The male colleagues to whom this invitation had been extended, blinked in a bewildered fashion, not knowing how to respond. And in that moment, I was disabused of the notion that my job – my

formal power as it were – will protect me from sexist abuse.

I deal with sexism every day; it is par for the course when you occupy the position I do. And it comes from many sources. Some of it is even mildly entertaining. When partner organization send representatives to meet me for the first time, they invariably shake the hand of the executive assistant (who is male), and greet him as Mr. Msimang, expectantly looking to me to get them their coffee. Each time, as we clarify, everyone laughs – they uncomfortably and Percy and I genuinely – and we move on. I have developed a tough skin.

But that incident threw me. If you took away the maleness of the harasser, you might be convinced that he had less 'power' than me. He earns less than I do and is probably less politically and socially connected than I am. But he harassed me with impunity, and despite my education, my assertiveness, my power and my knowledge of the law, I could not find the right words to defend myself.

The moment my radar picked up where this was going, I made a choice to find a more respectful conversation to participate in, in another corner of the room. I knew where it was headed and I certainly wasn't going to stick around for it. It was pretty clear why I was leaving, but I did not cause a fuss. I have regretted not making a stink, for the last year. And so of course for weeks after the in-

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cident, I was wracked with guilt over my (non) response. Why – given everything – did I keep quiet? The truth is complicated. Partly, I was responding to the fact that I am so insulated by my position of formal power (I am the 'boss' in my organisation), that this took me by complete surprise. Naïve, I know, but true. The obvious corollary is to race relations: just as making it to the top for black people in racist societies allows us to believe that racism has disappeared, even when its architecture is evident around us, many women in leadership positions begin to believe that sexism is not as rife as it really is.

Our positions protect us from sexism in its crudest forms, and because we have ascended in the hierarchy, we begin to believe that we are living proof that the system works. We remember sexism in our own lives, and ascribe it to the past: it used to be bad we think, but things have changed, otherwise I wouldn't be here. Indeed, because many of us have fought so hard for policy change, we have a self-serving interest in believing that sexism has diminished: aren't we the pioneers who have fought to eradicate it?

<http://blogs.discovermagazine.com>



There is a way too, in which the more senior you get, the more you have to lose – the system rewards those who behave like alpha males. If you file charges, or cry foul, you become the shrill, anti-male, hysterical woman, who can't

race, I would have had no qualms about telling him where to get off. Indeed, my non-aggressive colleagues would have leapt to my defense. But we live in a society in which blatantly sexist men continue to operate with impunity, and

in which there is a clear double standard: it is much less okay to be racist than it is to be sexist.

Martha Langelan, a sexual harassment expert puts it best: "A woman who engages in a clear, principled confrontation confounds not only the harasser's sexist expectations, but the entire social pattern of male dominance and power behind his decision to harass. Faced with sexist aggression... she makes it personally difficult for the harasser to continue his behavior; she also creates the beginnings of a new social structure, one in which harassment is no longer a cost-free game for men."

I let the team down. As a society it is important that if the advances that have been made are to be real, we raise the cost of harassment. Until we do, and in particular, until women with some measure of access to social power do, there are no guarantees that the next generation of women will be able to fight a different set of battles. I hope this Women's Month is a reminder that the road ahead requires all of us to contribute to social change.

fight her own battles. If you are tough enough to take on men in the boardroom, the logic goes, then surely you can do a little bit of verbal rough and tumble. But of course the sparring must happen on the terms of the aggressor: you either participate in the sexual banter (which in my view is a non-option), or you allow yourself to become the object of crude sexual jokes (another non-option).

So perversely, the moment you become powerful enough to change the rules of the game, you are less likely to have the informal opportunities with which to challenge the narrative. And when you can engage power in this way, you often don't because of the powerful ways in which women are seduced into the likeability trap. To make a fuss about sexual harassment when you are at a certain level of seniority as a woman, when it is assumed that you are assertive enough to deal with it head on yourself, is to be seen in some ways as 'difficult,' or sensation-seeking.

Of course I know that it is not my fault and that there were compelling reasons for my silence. But I also know that had he been white, and had he spoken to me in equally offensive tones, about my

Sisonke Msimang is the Executive Director of the Open Society Initiative for Southern Africa (OSISA). This is an edited version of her blog post on the OSISA website at: <http://osisa.org/womens-rights/blog/cost-silence-about-harassment>

Pro-Democracy Forces Must Rally Together For Viable Reforms

Coordinator's Note



dewaMAVHINGA

It is obvious to observers of Zimbabwe politics that the so-called power-sharing government arrangement, which has achieved little in terms of reforms over the last two years, is now subject to the law of diminishing returns. Without pressure both from within the country and from external structures like SADC, it is highly unlikely that Zimbabwe's political parties will be able to come up with a decent constitution and acceptable electoral reforms leading to free and fair elections. Short of the MDC formations walking out of the marriage of inconvenience with ZANU-PF which would be suicidal at this point, the best form of pressure can only come from a rallying together of pro-democracy forces within Zimbabwe to demand democratic reforms.

By continued association with ZANU-PF over an extended period of time in the coalition government that continues to drag its feet on critical reforms in the face of ongoing abuses, the MDC formations risk losing credibility through contamination of their brands. The MDC formations are

part of the government under whose watch members of parliament are physically assaulted within the precincts of parliament while the police take no action. They are part of a government that buys ultra-expensive luxury vehicles for cabinet while begging the international community to fund constitutional reform and to feed at least two million Zimbabweans at risk of starvation. The current government is now moving to commit economic suicide by implementing half-backed, loot-and-plunder-oriented indigenization and economic empowerment policies that are nothing but a lame excuse for a political elite to loot foreign-owned companies and bring Zimbabwe to certain economic ruin.

Collective responsibility for government policies and conduct for those in government is implied unless there is a clear, unambiguous indication that the MDC formations are not in agreement with such ruinous, self-serving policies and actions and a parallel structure acting outside the interests of the people of Zimbabwe is responsible. Beyond such an explicit disassociation, there is an urgent

need for all pro-democracy forces in within the country to rally together to mobilize the people of Zimbabwe to reject ruinous policies and to demand political change in the country. It must be put beyond doubt in the minds of Zimbabweans that the MDC is not part of a culture of loot and plunder, a culture that puts personal gain ahead of national development.

Zimbabwe needs renewed energy and focus on reforms that matter driven by a united front that inspires ordinary Zimbabweans to believe, once more, that a new, better Zimbabwe is possible in our lifetime. The unity of purpose such as the one exhibited by political parties, civil society groups, women's groups, social movements, trade unions, students and churches displayed in 2000 when they worked together to defeat an imposed constitutional draft in the February referendum is what Zimbabwe needs urgently today. We need a new energy that says we cannot resign to fate, or simply wait for nature to present to us political change, we need to wrestle with fate to achieve the change

we desire to see in our country.

My proposal to the pro-democracy political leadership and leaders of women's groups, students, youths, civics, churches and trade unions, among others, is to urgently convene another People's Convention to examine the political mess that we find ourselves in and develop a simple, democratic program of action to apply sufficient pressure to ensure critical reforms. Only in the context of ample pressure generated inside the country, can support from regional leaders help to achieve meaningful change.

The MDC formations should constantly return to the rock from which they were hewn – their staying political power is not derived from their being in government, but from the millions of Zimbabweans who have confidence in them that they are a viable vehicle through which to realize democratic change. When we rejected the 2000 constitutional draft, we sang a revolutionary song urging the drafters of the dismissed draft to 'go back to the people to consult.' In the same vein, pro-de-

mocracy leaders must remain with the people and, to borrow a phrase from chairman Mao, be among the people as fish in water.

It is only when we have united democratic leadership from under inspired, connected leadership that we can attract thousands of young people who are presently disinterested in matters of their country and their future to step and contribute to the reconstruction and transformation of Zimbabwe into a better society that cares for its people, especially the most vulnerable members of society. The 'deeply-felt and immediate hopes and aspirations of the millions of our people' referred to in the Global Political Agreement can only be realized on the back of significant and sustained political pressure for change.

Once we have an active, united democratic front platform we can be assured that we are in a position to set the pace and conditions of reform, and not to continuously respond to an agenda set by ZANU-PF and its allies.

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When hate speech jingles in

So here I was last week listening to Power FM's mid-day news where they were reporting on Simon Khaya Moyo's meeting with Ambassador Charles Ray and castigating pirate radio stations such as VOP and Studio 7 for promoting violence by using hate language and spreading propaganda that seeks to divide Zimbabwe.

So I thought to myself; do we honestly want to go that route? Well, since I also watch Zimbabwe Broadcasting Holdings TV and as mentioned above radio too, this criticism came as off the mark. I have always complained about how both the print and electronic media bombard us with propaganda all the time.

The language within which such propaganda is couched is, in fact, hate speech because it seems

to promote violence and division within the society. Just listen to some of the songs they air. In a country where sustainable peace is critical in rebuilding the socio-economic and political status, jingles (of whatever format) and propaganda may not be the best ways to go for a public broadcaster.

There is a law that derives its prosperity from repetition and this has played very well with ZBH. There is so much repetition of songs of the liberation struggle, power, and control of government that it becomes so difficult not to sing along when they play.

However, such content plays a major role in brainwashing the young minds to such an extent that some even start believing whatever it is that they will be hearing.

To make matters worse, the thinking capacities are then some-

what crippled because the repetition just seems to suspend one's thinking! For me this contributes significantly to disunity in the nation and in some instances leads to violence. Then we complain that the pirate radio stations are spreading propaganda and want to enforce regime change.

The fact that they may have a different way of thinking might not necessarily translate to regime change. It could just be that, they are a different voice but I guess this is hard to believe in a country where even the colour of my underwear has been politicized and depending on the colour, I may be accused of pushing the interest of a certain political party or even faction. Before you know it, one becomes the victim of violence and disunity.

What Zimbabwe needs is the liberation of both the print and electronic media.

A space where there is freedom of speech, expression of self and thought. It is not a bad thing that we all think differently and I'm sure that sometimes when you listen hard enough, the other opinion could actually hold water. This is crucial for unity because it is in realizing our differences and working on our commonalities that unity is birthed and sustained.

It is therefore not right as the youth of today – and I should hasten to say that the leaders of today and tomorrow- we are forced to watch and listen to some propaganda that does not enable us to think independently and enforce transformation in our lives and those of others. There is so much power in what we watch and listen to and the more this continues to happen, the more parrots we are going to become.

Let us stop point-



ing fingers at others and begin to look at the log in our own eye so that we are able to remove that log and see clearly to assist others. Zimbabwe needs an independent media that will facilitate different ideologies to interact and not some one track-minded propaganda machine.

If VOP and Studio 7

will provide that then, let us use those platforms to share our thoughts and sentiments until the public broadcaster becomes just that – a voice of the people.

Grace Chirenje-Nachipo is an activist.

UPCOMING ACTIVITIES:

- > Zimbabwe Human Rights Arts Festival; Musina, South Africa (9-11 September)
- > United Nations Human Rights Council session & Zimbabwe UPR; Geneva, Switzerland (15 September - 20 October)

Zuma needs a democratic Zimbabwe to gain credibility

The continued claim by South African President Jacob Zuma that the approach of the international community to Libya is just one more example of their lack of respect for Africa is not only misplaced but fails to factor in historical considerations relating to the end of apartheid and this country’s woeful efforts to bring lasting peace to conflicts on the continent. In response to a US proposed draft resolution to the UN Security Council on Wednesday — to release frozen Libyan assets for the benefit of the National Transitional Council (NTC) — South Africa agreed to release a third of the assets seized here, opposed making the balance available until the NTC has been recognised by the UN and suggested that it will work in concert with the African Union while condemning any form of violence and the doctrine of imposed regime change.

This fails to factor in the fact that regime change came about in South Africa precisely because the international community, acting with liberation movements, brought enormous pressure to bear on the apartheid government. Without that external pressure — of which African countries also played an important part — the multiracial democracy that exists today would still be in contemplation rather than a reality. Moreover players like Colonel Muammar Gaddafi were not the parties who assisted South Africa, it was the Libyan people and their resources of which Gaddafi just happened to be the leader. It is not the leaders of the countries but the country as a whole that gave support to ending apartheid. This is what makes the previous South African support for Mugabe instead of the Zimbabwean people even more disturbing.

In addition it is pointless condemning violence on both sides in Zimbabwe and Libya and suggesting that this is being even-handed when the people of those countries can hardly deliver the same murderous firepower that Gaddafi and Mugabe’s forces can and do inflict on their people. It is all very well to push for recognition of South Africa and Africa on the world stage but this requires that this country and continent demonstrate their ability to deal with domestic concerns.

Presently every conflict resolution appears to involve a dictator retaining power within the country concerned and the people having to make do with whatever power sharing or government of national unity that the strongmen will allow. In the case of Zimbabwe, as I have stated previously, should Zuma and the Southern African Development Community (SADC) deliver a free and fair election then this will be our president’s finest hour. No mat-

Brother to Brother?

- The spotlight is on President Jacob Zuma to see how he will act on the Libyan crisis despite South Africa having voted in favour of a UN Security Council Resolution on the oil-rich country. - newzimbabwe.com



In other developments, Zimbabwe has expelled the Libyan Ambassador, Taher Elmagrahi for recognising the rebel National Transitional Council (NTC). Last Wednesday, Elmagrahi took a leading role in burning pictures of fallen leader, Muammar Gaddafi and lowering the green Libyan flag while hoisting the red, black, green flag from 1951. Foreign Affairs Minister, Simbarashe Mumbengegwi said Zimbabwe did not recognise the NTC and therefore Elmagrahi’s actions deprived him and his staff of any diplomatic status. However, more incisive analysis reveals that there are fears in the government of Zimbabwe that they meet similar fate to Gaddafi’s. -Editor.

ter what else should crop up along the way during his presidency, a stable Zimbabwe would be a major boost to South Africa and the SADC region as a whole replacing our biggest liability with a fully functioning asset. It would remove enormous drain on regional resources and restore an important trading partner.

In the past South Africa, and only this country, must accept the blame for the continuation of President Robert Mugabe. When the international community signalled its readiness to act on Zimbabwe it was South Africa — having previously employed “quiet diplomacy” — who rushed to the UN to save Mugabe and cost our country and the region all the additional billions that it has since 2008 and has left Zuma to deal with the problem.

Ironically with Morgan Tsvangirai, undoubtedly the victor in the last election, it was South Africa who ensured there wouldn’t be regime change even if it was voted out and that violence, which it currently condemns, is to a large degree created by our own actions in saving Mugabe. Accordingly to suggest that road maps which see the continuation of brutal dictators like Gaddafi and Mugabe — all the while looting the wealth of their countries at the expense of their people — are better than decisive action by the international community is to show total disregard for the Libyan and Zimbabwean people.

If the international community had adopted that ap-

proach to South Africa the disgraceful policies of apartheid would still be in place. South Africa must act in accordance with what is right by the Libyan people and forget about getting married to the principles laid down by Africa. If the African proposal is the one which brings about a full-blown democracy in Libya then support it. Unfortunately it does not and would have been a repeat of Zimbabwe, Kenya and other cop-outs where African leaders refuse to step aside and free their people after decades of rule. In addition before taking a firm stand on Libya, South Africa needs to establish its leadership credentials by delivering Zimbabwe into the safe hands of its elected leaders in a free and fair election.

If Zuma can achieve that world leaders will recognize his and South Africa’s ability to give leadership in the region and on the continent. Until then remember as a rule of thumb that the people of each country and not their dictators supported South Africa in ending apartheid and backing them against their own people is a betrayal of the worst order.

By Michael Trapido. This article first appeared on the Mail & Guardian’s Thought Leader blog. It can be accessed here: <http://www.thoughtleader.co.za/traps/2011/08/26/zuma-needs-a-democratic-zimbabwe-to-gain-credibility-over-libya/>

InBRIEF

Abuse still rampant in Marange

Zimbabwe police and private security guards employed by mining companies in the Marange diamond fields are shooting, beating and unleashing attack dogs on poor, local unlicensed miners, Human Rights Watch said Tuesday.

The evidence gathered by Human Rights Watch contradicts claims that areas controlled by private mining companies, instead of by the Zimbabwe government alone, are relatively free of abuses.

Over the past six months, police and private security personnel have attempted to clear the fields of local miners whom they accuse of illegally mining diamonds. Human Rights Watch research found that in many cases, the police and private security guards used excessive force against the miners. The violence follows claims, in June, by the government and the head of an international industry monitoring body that conditions in the Marange fields are sufficient for it to be allowed to resume exports of diamonds from Marange.

“Shooting defenseless miners and unleashing dogs against them is inhuman, degrading and barbaric,” said Tiseke Kasambala, senior Africa researcher at Human Rights Watch. “The diamonds from the Marange fields are tainted with abuse.”

Local civil society activists told Human Rights Watch that the government has granted six international mining companies concessions in the Marange fields. The companies’ private security guards carry out joint patrols of the min-

ing areas with Zimbabwe police. Local miners said that most of the companies have built electric fences around their mining concessions, while security guards with dogs regularly patrol the concessions. However, local miners are still able to reach the fields and sometimes stray into areas under the companies’ control.

Some members of the international diamond monitoring body, known as the Kimberley Process, have tried to argue that conditions in the areas controlled by joint ventures are not abusive, and that those diamonds should be certified and allowed onto international markets. But Human Rights Watch has found, on the contrary, evidence of serious abuse by private security guards patrolling the joint venture territory.

Human Rights Watch researchers interviewed 10 miners in Mutare and towns close to the Marange diamond fields who had been beaten by guards and attacked by their dogs after being caught by mine security in the past six months. During patrols police would also fire live ammunition at the miners as they fled, the miners said. -Human Rights Watch

Zim diamonds and KP under scrutiny

Meanwhile, a roundtable seminar under the theme *Zimbabwe’s Diamonds and the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme: Effectiveness and Responsibilities* has been planned today at the University of Witwatersrand in Johannesburg today. Speakers include; Farai Maguwu, Director, Centre for Research and Development; Dewa Mavhinga, Regional Coordina-

tor, Crisis in Zimbabwe Coalition; Venitia Govender, Social Justice and Human Rights Activist; Professor Brian Raftopoulos, Director of Research, Solidarity Peace Trust; Alan Martin, Director of Research, Partnership Africa Canada; Claude Kambamba, Director, Southern Africa Resource Watch; Ambassador Aldo Dell’Ariccia, Ambassador Head of EU Delegation to Zimbabwe; Kathryn Sturman, Programme Head, Governance of Africa’s Resources Programme, SAIIA.

First-ever Zim Human Rights Arts Festival slated for Musina

The concept of Human Rights in Africa is not widely understood, neither is it openly articulated, nor embraced at the family, organizational and national levels. Education systems and propaganda on national media platforms redefine human rights in broad terms that do not readily relate to the reality in the lives of ordinary people. There are no platforms available to the communities that define the rights of people or how they can understand them better and advocate for them.

That the phrase ‘human rights violations’ is only raised when gross violations such as violence or murder occur, is a major cause of concern. Against this backdrop, the Crisis in Zimbabwe Coalition brings the first-ever Zimbabwe Human Rights Arts Festival to the South African border town of Musina from 9 to 11 September 2011. The festival aims at using art to articulate a human rights discourse that speaks to the everyday living of migrant Zimbabweans as well as the South

Africans who are hosting them. For more information, please contact, Sharon Gwati (misstendai@gmail.com OR media@crisiszimbabwe.org)

Malema hearing enters second day



The disciplinary hearing of the African National Congress Youth League (ANCYL) leader, Julius Malema (pictured with Zimbabwe’s Indegenisation Minister, Saviour Kasukuwere (right)) enters its second day today. The hearing is being held at the ANC Headquarters, Luthuli House in central Johannesburg. Yesterday, thousands of Malema supporters descended on central Johannesburg, bringing traffic to a standstill. Soon, this crowd began to pelt stones at police and journalists and were a nuisance around this part of Johannesburg, littering and burning posters of Jacob Zuma and the ANC flag for no clear reason. Malema is being charged, among things, for calling for regime change in Botswana and bringing the party into disrepute. He is a well-known ally of the former ruling ZANU-PF Youth League which hosted him in Zimbabwe in April 2010.