

Suffering in Silence: African Men as Victims of their own Culture and the Feminist Movement

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Abstract: The African view of men as always strong and unflinching, accompanied by Feminist campaigns and views, has resulted in men suffering abuse in silence. Boys are the most affected victims as they cannot get help in situations where they are abused by the older female of society. Like their seniors, they cannot run to the law for protection or redress either, especially when they are taken advantage of by women sexually, because of the demands and expectations of society. Society expects men to be strong and persevere in face of challenges to prove their manhood. Feminists have managed to make the world see men as abusers who are never abused but are patriarchal in nature and approach, and that has made the world view men as monsters who deserve to be punished for having an upper hand over women. This article seeks to expose and discuss abusive instances in life in general in Africa where abuse, both physical and emotional, has been visited on men by women and argue that the way such events are viewed by African societies, and in some cases by feminists, constitute reverse abuse that the Feminist movement seeks to redress. It is being argued in this article that men have borne the brunt of psychological abuse by women for quite some time in African societies but of late physical abuse has been added. African societies have become oversensitive to abuse of women by men so much that a man being beaten up by a woman is seen as tasting his own medicine and such acts of violence are tolerated. Evidence will be taken from Zimbabwean newspaper-reports, which demonstrate how widespread instances of men abuse are but society is not treating them with the same urgency that women abuse by men is treated.

Keywords: Domestic violence, Gender ideology, Hegemonic masculinity, Abuse, Culture, Feminism.

INTRODUCTION

Mashangwa [1] points out that “It is unfortunate that men do not report their violent wives because of stereotypes men ought to be more strong, aggressive and powerful than women”. Even more unfortunate is the fact that women are most active participants in the preaching of the aforementioned stereotype to their boy children. Men suffer violence in silence due to expectations that are exerted on them by cultural expectations which tend to have a damaging psychological effect resulting in them bottling up emotions only to burst out into violence against their female counterparts. Mapimhidze [2] argues that “the actual psychological damage inflicted by women is so much greater than the actual physical harm inflicted by men”. The foregoing statement might sound too strong, most probably due to lack of research in the area of emotional violence and violence perpetrated by women against men which has led to lack of statistics to support such assertions. The condoning of verbal assault on men by women is quiet evident in clichés like ‘hell hath no fury like a woman scorned’. It is the aim of this article to explore and expose the impact of women’s

verbal attacks on men and how cultural justification of such acts can stand as a stumbling block in the way of efforts of fighting domestic violence. The world tends to place more emphasis on physical violence alone as if it is the only form abuse.

Men are, generally, expected to be sexually aggressive and must not flinch in the face of sexual opportunities that are presented to them by women. A man is not expected to turn down an opportunity of a sexual offer from a woman and at times they are kept guessing as to whether it is an offer or a trap, but not taking up the offer may still prove to be a suicidal move. Culturally, men cannot be raped hence the boy child has become an unprotected victim of female sexual predators. While there are organisations that claim to look after the interests of the girl child, there is unbelievable silence on the side of the boy child. The casual attitude towards the plight of the boy child contrasts glaringly with the protection of the girl child and is likely not going to help the fight against domestic violence, violation and victimisation of the boy child. A boy who is abused by a woman is viewed as strong and

assertive so much that the woman may not be viewed in the same light that a man who abuses a girl would be viewed. A complaint of unfair treatment of men by women is viewed as unrealistic. Hudson [3] reveals that the talk of unfair treatment of men is not part the world's agenda when he says: "In principle we could ask similar questions about discrimination against males but nobody has even tried to argue that case so we don't need to consider it." There is some cultural influence to this lopsided view of unfair treatment of men and boys, particularly in Africa.

The Feminist movement has not helped the situation for men in general and African men in particular. The feminist movement has tended to view African culture as always positive towards men and always negative towards women. It is also the objective of this article to discuss and show how the African culture and Feminist attitudes victimise males. Feminist ideas have tended to view the world as being only good for men and bad for women all the time. The term patriarchy is used by Feminists to explain how culture has favoured men and disadvantaged women. This article argues that such an attitude demonises the aims and principles of Feminism as a movement for the betterment of the lives of human beings. The Feminist approach seems to set men against women instead of uniting the world against unfair treatment of all humanity. An analysis of mainly newspaper and other media reports help this article argue that men are victims of culture and Women's Liberation Movement attitudes in as far as domestic violence and the general abuse of men by women are concerned.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Culture is a broad aspect of human life inside which one finds other life's vicissitudes, one of which is gender and other issues which are related to it, including masculinity. The general tendency is to think of gender as concerned with women's rights and condemning male dominance over the female. The term gender has become synonymous with women just as much as domestic violence is. The most probable reasons central in such a skewed view of gender as a concept are cultural and social attitudes towards the relationship between the female and the male. Such social and cultural attitudes stem from masculinity and patriarchy. Masculinity sounds like a concept which is prescriptive of what a real man should be like. This article, however, views gender as a feature of all social relationships which is part of a quest of how inequalities develop and are sustained and how power is wielded [4]. There are four types of masculinities; but the one important to this article is hegemonic masculinity which, Morrell [5] argues, "presents its own version of masculinity, of how men should behave and how putative 'real men' do behave as the cultural ideal". Morrell [5] also points out that African masculinity was hegemonic in pre-colonial society.

Hegemonic masculinity is said to result in the oppression of women, silencing and subordination of other masculinities to it. It gives men a position of authority over women but at the same time it exerts a lot of pressure on men to exercise power over women. Men tend to take for granted respect and unquestioning subservience by women which if they do not get, tend to be violent. It is for the foregoing reason that this article views hegemonic masculinity as having a negative effect on men as much as it has on women. Hussein [6] postulates that hegemonic masculinity "causes men to lose sight of prudence, one important component of true humanity, and to take a measure that ultimately destroys them". Despite the arguments that men enjoy the advantages of patriarchy as propounded by feminism, men are also victims of hegemonic masculinity which is still well pronounced in African societies as is demonstrated by their lack of a voice against abuse by women because crying out would make them lose their positions as the strong and unflinching sex.

This article further argues that men pay a price for their dominance in society. The general tendency is to accept male dominance grudgingly and challenge them to prove that they really dominate women. Such a scenario tends to create tension between the sexes. Instead of them complementing each other they then compete. Stereotyping the expectations from men exerts pressure on them as much as it does on women and is not good for the function of any society. Feminism did not help the situation in Africa when arrived as a movement because it sought to reverse the relationship between males and females, arguing that 'patriarchy' was advantageous to men at the expense of women. It therefore gave African women and their sympathisers the feeling that it was right to harm men and men should 'take it like men', simply meaning that they must not complain since they have been enjoying themselves all along, yet Elliott [7] argues that "gender relations have always been oppressive and have also had negative consequences on men such as having to suppress emotions and put up a brave exterior". Dworkin et al [8] contend that rights for women were challenged and resisted by men because they were imposed from outside the African cultural context and the uncompromising manner in which they were enforced made men feel insecure. It is the manner in which feminist views of men's position in society, this article contends, which perceived and labeled them patriarchy, meaning the rule of the father, which is causing problems for the redressing of imbalances in relations between males and females. This article contends that while women are said to be oppressed by men, men are equally oppressed by the whole myriad of social and cultural stereotypes and expectations. The current women's liberation campaign in Africa and the world, smacks of reversal oppression on men with the boy child being the worst victim. It is, therefore,

inevitable to argue that women and men must be equal members of one team fighting against inequalities suffered by both sexes as opposed to a situation which seeks to turn the tables on the other side to settle old scores. Evidence of abuse of men by women abounds in media reports, providing a tip of the iceberg in as far as men's suffering silently in the hands of women is concerned in Africa in general and in Zimbabwe in particular.

PHYSICAL ABUSE OF MEN BY WOMEN IN THE AFRICAN CULTURE CONTEXT

Men are generally viewed as aggressors and women victims, mainly because they are physically stronger than women. The view of men as aggressors is shared across many cultures of the world but the view seems stronger amongst Africans. Chifamba in the Patriot online newspaper points out that, "In African communities, female perpetrated domestic violence is likely to be unreported because of the African culture which depicts males as stronger and women as weaker." Chifamba further argues that such cases go unreported because of shame and also because they may not be taken seriously. The June 15, 2011 issue of the Chronicle on page 12 [9] reports that Mr. Reason Sibanda was assaulted by his wife Siphangisile Zwangendaba using open hands and later a pan and sustained a deep cut but did not visit a nearby clinic because "he was too 'shy' to present his case to female nurses". Sibanda (30 years old) is however reported to have "put behind (sic) the male egoism associated with most married men and went on to file an assault report against his 19-year old wife". It is an open secret that any male who wants to leave police officers in stitches in Zimbabwe only needs to report that they have been beaten or abused by their wife. The whole camp may gather to catch a glimpse of such a man so as to have a big laugh for the day. In the report of Sibanda who was assaulted by his wife, it is revealed that the court gallery was left in stitches when Mr. Sibanda told the court that he did not have a medical report because he was 'shy' to visit the nearby 'female staffed polyclinic'. The source of the attitude of the law enforcement agents and the public in general is the African culture which does not leave room for abuse of men by women yet, though not as prevalent as the abuse of women by men, exists and is currently gathering momentum in Zimbabwe.

Chifamba [10] writes also about a Ghanaian man who used to be thoroughly assaulted by his wife in the presence of their children but because of fear of the law he could not fight back but he accidentally hit her while trying to defend himself from a hot iron one day and his wife rang the police and he was removed from the house yet he had been a victim for six years. African women generally become strong headed once they are in the 'Diaspora' (as the foreign lands where Africans live as economic refugees are popularly known in Zimbabwe). They seek to revenge on men or reverse the

treatment they receive from the African culture yet men cannot take legal action against them because the African man in them does not allow them to do that. It becomes a double blow to African men in the 'Diaspora' who are abused by their women who take advantage of the law in foreign lands which punishes men heavily without thoroughly investigating the reasons for African men's beating up of their women. At the core of this domestic violence or its reversal is emotional abuse that men are subjected to by their women directly and by their culture indirectly because their culture presents them as strong heads of their families who cannot be disciplined by their wives.

The October 21, 2013, issue of the Sothern Eye [11] newspaper reports that a Gwanda woman was hauled before a magistrate for severely assaulting her husband and was fined \$100 or thirty days in prison. The woman is reported to have struck her husband several times on the head with a cooking stick (uphini) and bit him four times on the chest, stomach, thigh and hand. It is the statement made by the magistrate after passing the sentence which is quite revealing about the difficulties exerted by African culture on men concerning issues of domestic violence. The magistrate is quoted, on page 3 of the above referred to issue, as having argued that "In our patriarchal African society very few men (sic) will (sic) approach the police when abused by their wives. Therefore Nkolomi should be commended for exhibiting some form of bravery". It is clear that the bravery is used in a mocking tone because it has connotations of saying that reporting that a man has been abused by a woman is unheard of in African culture. Men are expected to bear the abuse in silence to prove that they are man enough. Only those who have no shame (those who are brave) can take such matters to the police. The implication is that those men who report such cases usually become laughing stalk hence one should be brave to stand such an experience, which sounds like double abuse that men go through due to African culture. African men are indeed victims of the African culture.

Women have also been found entangled in cases of murder yet, ironically, the constitution of Zimbabwe excludes women from death sentence but men are not spared that harsh sentence and that discrimination flies in the face of equality of both sexes! Women are cunning murderers who might not be directly involved in the murder of men but use other men to do the dirty work for them. The Daily News of November 13, 2013 [12] reports that two sisters from Murewa tied the hands of their brother with a piece of wire before beating him to death over a broken key. With the assistance of one of the sisters' boyfriend, they used a hammer to knock life out of the young man. When two sisters tie their brother's hands and use a hammer to strike him all over the body until he dies it becomes premeditated murder but those mandated with

crafting the supreme law of the land, in their wisdom or lack thereof, decided to exclude women from the death sentence! The Chronicle (2013, December 27) [13] reports that Elizabeth Mbulayi killed Simbarashe Denhere in cold blood after he had confessed to his family that he had sired a child out of wedlock because his wife, it was alleged, could not conceive. It is alleged that Mbulayi was found in a room which was locked with the body of her husband and man who was suspected to be having an affair with her. The alleged boyfriend whether he was 'used' to kill Denhere or not, will have to answer questions from investigating officers. The above report is a clear case of women as cunning murderers who can use men to kill one another, yet the constitution of Zimbabwe spares them the death sentence which is meted out to men in a clear favoritism. It is such unfairness coupled with some overzealous enforcement of women's rights campaigns which might pit women against men in the fight against gender based violence instead of uniting them into a team that is fighting a common enemy.

PSYCHOLOGICAL ABUSE OF MEN BY WOMEN EVIDENCE

Locking husbands out for coming home late is a common form of emotional abuse that women use to punish their husbands for coming home late. Such an act appears mild but it has a serious impact on a man's self esteem but is viewed as normal in African societies. The issue of the Chronicle of the 16th of January 2013 on page 2 [14], reports that a Mr. Takavarasha from Masvingo was locked out by his wife for coming home late for two consecutive days. The report alleges that on the second day the woman entertained another man in their matrimonial bedroom on their matrimonial bed. When the man sought an explanation for the misdemeanor, a fight ensued and the man who was being overpowered was saved by neighbours who had gathered to witness the drama. The concerned man in this report suffered double embarrassment emotional abuse; that of finding another man being entertained by his wife on their bed and that of being overpowered by his wife! African societal expectations weigh too heavily on men who lose fights to women and such men may be forced to resort to worse violence and kill their wives in the process but men cannot use such an argument in their defence yet it is a possibility.

A Bulawayo man, Andrew Dube was advised by a magistrate to up his game in the bedroom instead of going about fighting men who have affairs with his wife. This piece of advice was proffered after Dube had been convicted and charged for malicious damage to property after he smashed Casper Ncube's cellular phone that had been sending messages to Dube's wife's phone [15]. There is nothing that can be as emotionally devastating to a man as a wife who has an affair because, culturally, a woman can only have one man whereas men can marry as many women as their wealth

and energy can allow. It becomes worse when a court of law, an institution which is expected to deliver justice, condones and justifies a woman's infidelity on the grounds that her man might be sexually weak. The fact that the magistrate in question is a woman makes matters worse because it gives the impression that two women are conspiring against Dube and setting him against another man. The case in question exposes conflict between the African culture and the Western cultural informed feminist approach which counsels that men and women must be on an equal footing. The contradiction between Feminism and African culture combine to subject African men to emotional torture. It is this torture which generally leads to men's violent reactions. Sources of such violent behaviour, as demonstrated by cases found in the media, are emotional abuse of men by women. Equally worrying is the tendency of the law to be lenient on women while being harsh on men as evidenced by Sibongile Msipa's advice (the magistrate in the above report).

Samantha Mpunzi confessed to sending pictures of herself making love with another man to her South African based boyfriend saying she wanted to fix him after he did the same to her. The incident comes barely a couple of weeks after yet another married Bulawayo woman phoned her husband to 'listen and enjoy' as she was having sex with her husband's best friend (Mugrade 7, November 2013) [16]. The two reports are evidence of emotional abuse of men by women and they also reveal that women feel justified to abuse men as a measure of revenge for what men do to them. Such an attitude is possibly inspired by feminist tendencies of wanting to outdo men and beat them at their game instead of condemning what is bad regardless of who does it.

Emotional abuse is usually the main reason for violent behaviours from men. Women abuse women emotionally through certain subtle demeanors which also amount to verbal abuse. Verbal abuse is the most common and lethal artillery at the disposal of women and because it does not leave physical scars, it is generally not viewed as bad as physical abuse that is associated with men for the simple reason that men are generally believed to be physically stronger than women. Nevertheless, verbal abuse is viewed by this writer as equally as bad as physical abuse if not worse. The Chronicle issue of 21 January 2014 on page 2 [17] carries a sad story of a man Tulibambile Munsaila, who was verbally and emotionally abused by his wife, Kerina Ngomen, who, it is reported, bragged about having a boyfriend because her husband had a small sexual organ while she preferred a big one! She even refused that they try for the third child arguing that because the husband had a small organ he could go and sleep with his mother for the third child. The man in question was not employed while the boyfriend was a Criminal Investigation Department (CID) staffer. It is

easy to conclude that the main problem was not the man's organ but his economic status because it is also mentioned in the report that the woman once argued that her CID boyfriend was better than Munsaila because he had money unlike Munsaila who was a vendor. The argument of a small organ is a weapon which is generally used by women when they have been caught cheating and they want out of a matrimonial union. The woman in question argues that her husband used to beat her up. It is quite intriguing to argue that a man who is told to go and sleep with her mother would just fold his hands and watch his wife verbally abusing him. That argument is not different from an insulting expression which is common among the Ndebele if they want to provoke a man to fight and that expression is 'msathanyoko' (mother fucker) and there can be no worse emotional abuse than that expression. So many men have been subjected to insults such as the one Munsaila was subjected to by Ngomen but have found it embarrassing to go public about it because doing so is culturally unmanly. The details of the feud between Munsaila and Ngomen came out during a court session when Munsaila was demanding maintenance money for their two children. The case as reported is yet to be concluded and was deferred to 28 January 2014.

EVIDENCE OF SEXUAL ABUSE OF MEN BY WOMEN

The 21 – 27 December 2012 issue of the *B – Metro*, on page 12 [18], reports that a maid forced a six-year old boy to have sex with her. It is reported that she was asked by her employer, the mother of the boy, to sleep with the boy and she obliged. She then waited for the boy to fall asleep and started to play with his boyhood. She later got naked and got on top of the boy and then started to make sexual moves groaning and mourning as if she was having sex with the boy. The boy awakened and enquired on what was going on but the maid told him that she was playing with him. It is reported that she then inserted the boy's organ into hers. After the act she, typical of all rapists, threatened to chop off the boy's organ if he told anybody about his ordeal. All this came to light when the woman was arraigned before a Western Commonage magistrate in Bulawayo. She was remanded out of custody on a hundred dollar bail and one of her bail conditions, ironically, was that she was to reside at the given address which is the home of the boy that she 'raped'. The above story is clear evidence of abuse of men by women yet in most cases it is not talked about let alone reported about in the media and boys are the most affected.

The October 24, 2013 issue of the *Daily News* on page 3 [19] carries a report of a woman who was jailed for ten years for 'sexually assaulting' her fourteen year old step son. The case is not even referred to as rape but sexual assault. This is a clear case of inconsistency where a similar attack on a girl by a man

would have been termed rape but when it is a male on the receiving end, terms of reference to the offence change. Sexual assault sounds quite less grave than rape but the effect on the psych of victims is the same whether girl or boy. The woman is said to have taken advantage of the absence of her husband who had been taken ill and was admitted at Parirenyatwa Hospital. The woman is said to have forced her stepson into her bedroom, striped him naked and had sexual intercourse with him. She threatened to assault him if he cried out. The offence was discovered when the boy told his father after discovering that he was passing out urine laced with blood. Threatening a victim with violence is consistent with rapists and this woman is one and the sentence confirms that but the language used does not. Underlying this type of language is a culture of viewing abuse of man as not as grave an offence as the abuse of women. Such an attitude is more pronounced in most African societies than anywhere else and more so in Zimbabwe. The worst result of such an attitude is that it discourages men from complaining about abuse by women hence they continue to suffer in silence.

New Zimbabwe, an online newspaper, of 28 November 2013 [20], carried a report of a Bulilima woman, Sithembile Tshuma who forced herself on a fifteen year old boy and was given a nine month sentence which was then suspended on condition that the woman does 210 hours of community service. The woman is reported to have argued that she had forced herself on the boy because she was sex starved since her husband was based in South Africa. She also requested to be spared a custodial sentence because she had a two year old baby. It is stated in the report that Tshuma lured the boy who is a form one pupil at a local school to her bedroom when he had visited his friend who is a nephew of Tshuma's husband. The friend of the victim went to investigate when he heard him screaming saying that he was in pain only to find Tshuma in the act. She seemed not worried about being discovered, instead, she invited his nephew to watch and learn some sexual tricks. There is no doubt that the sentence handed out to Tshuma is far too light compared to what a man found guilty of statutory rape would have received. The sentence of 210 hours of community service is not deterrent enough and trivialises the offence of sexual abuse of a minor that the woman in the report committed. Clearly, the Zimbabwe law does not fully protect the boy child if the sentence given to Tshuma is anything to go by. Tshuma did not view herself as the aggressor but a victim of neglect by her husband as is demonstrated by her reason for forcing herself on the boy yet this straightforward case of rape, not even statutory rape because the boy was screaming and protesting in pain.

The *Herald* issue of 13 December, 2013 [21], reports that four women were arraigned before a magistrate for bedding a fourteen year old boy. The four

are Cynthia Muvengeranwa, Annah Gatso, Memory Chimuka and Florida Mupfuranhewe. They appeared before a Harare magistrate Mr. Donald Ndirowei. Gatso had sex with the 14-year-old and threatened to knife him if he revealed the matter hence was charged with aggravated indecent assault. The other three women are reported to have slept with the boy and gave him cash and groceries. It is the general practice of rapists to use the stick and carrot method on statutory rape victims. In the above report the same methods were employed by the four women but the absence of the term statutory rape in describing the given type of abuse, as is usually the case if a similar offence is committed by a man against a girl of the same age, is unacceptable. These women are rapists and deserve to be referred to as such but the media and the court tend to be lenient on women aggressors. This article views those tendencies as unfair to male victims and unjust. In the African culture, it is unusual for a man to be a victim of sexual abuse hence boys and men continue to suffer unfair treatment by media reporting, in silence.

Mugrade 7 [22] reports that a twenty-year-old woman from Masvingo's Mucheke suburb, who coerced a 12-year-old boy from her neighbourhood into being intimate with her, was fined \$80 or 20 days in prison. It is reported that the woman would pay the boy \$2 for every encounter. Nelia Mapukute, of Mucheke A, pleaded not guilty when she appeared before a Masvingo magistrate. Mapukute is a typical rapist who takes advantage of children and uses incentives like money to entice them into yielding to her wishes. Fining a statutory rapist is viewed by this writer as tantamount to letting her go scot free. This is straightforward statutory rape case which should and would have attracted a custodial sentence, had it been committed by a man against a twelve year old girl. It is a case of sexual abuse of a minor but the law was too lenient to the woman in question strengthening the case that men are discriminated against when it comes to cases of abuse by women due to cultural views and the feminist argument that men are privileged and have been favoured for a long time hence its payback time whenever women get an opportunity of abusing them.

According to the B-Metro issue of 20 – 26 December 2013, on page 4 [23], a 22 year old maid was sentenced to twenty years in prison for raping a six-year old boy. It is reported that the maid shared a bedroom with the boy and was caught in the act by the mother of the boy on 28 November 2013, but, the report says, the act had become the order of the day. The mother of the boy woke up in the middle of the night to answer a call from a phone which was on the charger in the dining-room only to hear huffs and puffs coming from the spare bedroom and went in to investigate. She was shocked to find her child pinned down by the maid. It is reported that after being caught, the maid knelt down and begged for mercy from her employer who however

reported the case to the police at Nehanda Police Station in Gweru. Before passing the sentence, the magistrate revealed that the maid was HIV positive.

EVIDENCE OF PHYSICAL ABUSE OF MEN BY WOMEN

The B-Metro issue of 7 – 13 December 2012, a Bulawayo tabloid, on page 2 [24] reports that a woman scalded her husband over a phone call which she answered on the husband's phone while he was dead asleep. It is reported that she questioned the caller who revealed that she was having an affair with the husband of the offended lady and the lady boiled some water and woke her husband with a splash of boiling water. It is further reported that the husband refused even to go for treatment because that would have been tantamount to reporting his wife to the police. He chose to nurse his wounds silently from home. The general presentation of men as aggressors all the time in domestic violence leads the report not to mention that this incident happened during the period of the sixteen days of activism against gender based violence but the same issue of the B-Metro mentions the sixteen days against gender based violence when it reports about a man who was the aggressor by trying to choke his ex-girlfriend after she asked for money for their child's food. It is clear from the above incidents that men suffer gender based violence in silence and such matters do not raise much alarm. The treatment of the two reports demonstrates that the sixteen days of activism against gender based violence are about women and children and not men. Such an approach to an issue which is affecting the whole humanity is not likely to yield the desired results if the other part feels unfairly treated.

The Chronicle issue of 22 January 2013, on page 2 [25], reports that a Masvingo woman scalded her husband with porridge after finding a number in his phone book which she suspected to be that of his girlfriend. The woman poured the porridge on the manhood of her husband while he was asleep. It cannot be doubted that the aim of the woman was to render the manhood of her husband useless and there can be no worse attack on a man than attacking his manhood. A man without his manhood is as good as dead. This was a premeditated crime because the woman took her time to prepare the porridge before attacking the man. In the story there is no mention of the woman being reported to the police. She is reported to have left her matrimonial home with her two children. What is most disturbing is that she had the audacity to take children with her and is said to have been afraid of her in-laws and not the police. Clearly, the matter had not been reported to the police because such incidents are quite common in African communities in general and in Zimbabwe in particular and are not considered as crimes. They are considered as domestic issues which should be resolved by families of the concerned husband and wife hence it is the in-laws of the woman

who are fuming but it is not mentioned in the report that they reported the crime to the police a week after the crime had been committed, yet this is a serious case of domestic violence. Women get the courage to commit these acts of violence from the spirit of radical Feminism which preaches the gospel of revenge, encouraging women to give men the taste of their own medicine.

Another issue of B-Metro [26], on page seven, reports that a woman bit a chunk of her husband's lip. The quarrel began when the woman wanted to visit a market place to buy mangoes for resell. When her husband expressed opposition to the idea, the lady argued that the man could not stop her because he had failed to cater for her needs, a statement which this article regards as a form of emotional and verbal abuse because it implies that the man in question has failed as a father and head of the family. A scuffle then ensued between the man and his woman. The woman picked a stone and tried to hit the man but he ducked and the lady missed her target. She then bit a chunk of her husband's lower lip. The behaviour of the woman in the report demonstrates that men are not only victims of emotional and verbal abuse alone but also physical abuse. Unfortunately there are no many organisations which campaign against and condemn violence against men. Violence by women against men is unfortunately regarded by Feminists as subjecting men to the proverbial taste of their own medicine and seems justified. The B – Metro of 28 December 2012 – 2 January 2013, on page 5 [27], reports that Caroline Mguni assaulted Prosper Mguni, her husband, after finding him in the company of a woman whom she suspected to be his girlfriend. It is reported that Mrs. Mguni assaulted the girlfriend who managed to escape and then shifted her attention to her husband. According to the report, when Mrs. Mguni was asked about the incident, she owned up to beating up both her husband and his girlfriend but the husband was evasive and refused to comment on the issue. It is clear that the husband did not report the incident to the police and was embarrassed to accept that he was beaten up by his wife because African culture scoffs at a man who is beaten up by his wife.

The October 24, 2013 issue of the Daily News on page 2 [19] reports that Evidence Nkuna, aged twenty one, cut off her boyfriend's privates after finding him with another woman. The woman is described as having put her hands inside the pockets of a trench coat as she appeared before a magistrate in a South African court. The description of her deportment betrays a sense of no remorse for the life threatening act of brutality she committed on the man. Notwithstanding the pain she might have experienced when she caught her boyfriend with another woman, the punishment she meted out is quite outrageous. The conversion of the charge from assault with intent to cause grievous bodily

harm to attempted murder demonstrates the gravity of the crime and one would not expect her to put her hands inside the pockets of her trench coat as she stood before the magistrate.

LANGUAGE THAT IS USED AGAINST MEN

Hussein [6] considers the view that language is a means of communication as simplistic because language offers its users the opportunity to construct stereotypes of themselves and others. IsiNdebele as a language uses language in a manner that encourages and forces men to suffer silently. The expression 'Inyembezi zendoda zehlela esifubeni' (Tears of a man drop onto his chest) [28] means that a man must not express his suffering or pain but must persevere and 'carry it like a man'. The above expression encourages dangerous stoicism which might result in the bottling up of emotions leading to a burst up at some point which might result in violent behaviour. Such language has made it a culture for the Ndebele men to remain silent in suffering lest they are labeled women. Such a label carries untold embarrassment to Ndebele men. A man would rather suffer silently; or even die, than be labeled a woman. On the other hand women are free to express their feelings and even go beyond just expressing their feelings. They end up using that freedom to abuse men emotionally through nagging. Nagging is regarded as a 'women thing', 'their pass time', among many African societies and is tolerated for as long as it comes from a woman. It is quite intriguing that the African culture still considers bottling up issues by men, a virtue while talking (communication) is viewed as the pillar of conflict resolution in many a society. Relations are said to hit rock bottom in the absence of communication, particularly in marriages.

'Amadoda yizinja' (Men are dogs) is a common expression used by women to refer to men if men are caught cheating. This is a term which is meant to denigrate men and whip them into line but it sounds quite harsh. Despite the severity of the expression women in the Ndebele society use it freely and do not expect men to respond negatively to it despite its insulting nature. Men are expected to accept that kind of language because women are always their victims. Instead of correcting men, this expression has tended to force them into growing a thick skin and fulfilling that label by engaging in more 'dog-like' behaviours. Interestingly the term 'bitch' is considered vulgar in the English language but Ndebele women do not mind labeling men dogs! No sex deserves to be insulted as a form of correction and men should be no exception.

CONCLUSION

The general feeling is that "women are oppressed throughout the world" [6]. It is not the aim of this article to deny the foregoing assertion but to raise issue with the handling of relations of the two sexes by African culture and feminism. The handling of relations

between males and females has resulted in a situation which can easily be interpreted as reverse oppression. Women have tended to play victim all the time giving the impression that men are perennial beneficiaries of power relations between males and females. The state of affairs has resulted in men being forced to endure different forms of abuse from women silently due to pressure that is exerted on them by stereotypical expectations of hegemonic masculinity and patriarchy as postulated by feminists. The biggest loser in the whole complex set up has been the boy child. While the girl child has always been taken as disadvantaged all the time and has attracted sympathy and help from different quarters, the boy child has always been seen as the beneficiary of a bad system which needs urgent redress. Media reports and other research findings demonstrate that hegemonic masculinity and feminism attitudes are at the heart of men and boys' suffering in silence and what this article argues is reverse oppression as opposed to redressing the imbalances that characterise the relations between males and females.

Men's silence must not be viewed as a sign of strength or that they have no problems with prevailing relations between males and females. Instead, that silence must be seen as an indicator of an unfair system which does not balance relations between the sexes. The system needs an overhaul as opposed to a piecemeal approach which apportions blame to one group and sympathises with the other. Gender ideology needs to be redefined so that it does not separate human species into the male and the female but addresses issues as affecting all humanity. The division of human species into two warring groups helps only to further complicate issues and widens the gap between the two sexes instead of narrowing it. The division and labeling of the sexes is at the centre of feelings and attitudes such as the one betrayed by a female gender activist and radical feminist who argued that the majority of male victims are right in remaining silent as men have no right to complain as they are masculine and a privileged class [29]. This article argues that there is no beneficiary in a bad system. If ever the world can think a bad system is beneficiary to a certain group, the benefits would be only temporary. The article has demonstrated that what is viewed by feminists as beneficiary to men tends to exert pressure on them resulting in them suffering all types of abuse but not crying about them in the name of being 'man enough' and a privileged class. It is therefore sensible to call for a truce and a change of approach in the gender narrative so that it is not only thought to embrace men as well but be seen to be doing so by involving them in all activities of redressing gender imbalances. Labeling men beneficiaries of a bad system, unwittingly forces them to defend themselves and that bad system. In its current state, the gender narrative needs to be thoroughly sanitised. The gender narrative can only be sanitised by abandoning the business of dichotomising

humanity into privileged males and disadvantage females. All humanity must fight all that is bad regardless of whether it is perpetrated by a man or woman.

The world in general and Zimbabweans in particular must disabuse themselves of the unfounded argument that whenever there is a situation where families have to be fended for by children, it is the girl alone who suffers. The boy child also suffers but the suffering of the boy child might not be in the open for everyone to see because, like their fathers, boys do their duties away from the home when fending for families unlike girls who are at home in most cases and are therefore easy to notice that they are being abused. Boys are equally affected by circumstances that deprive children of a chance to further their education as shown by the report in the Sunday News Magazine of 19 – 25 January 2014 [30], that most boys in Insiza District usually drop out of school to become illegal gold miners, infamously known as 'otsheketsha' or 'amakorokoza' in Zimbabwe, a sentiment similar to one expressed by Mrs Thabela, the Education Director for Matabeleland South (Southern Eye, 30 December 2013) [31]. It should also be noted that the majority of street children are boys who would have been victims of many a broken home or lack of proper parental guidance. Mella (2012) [32] points out that findings by Musekiwa (2009), Ngulube (2010) and Ruvero and Bourdillon (2003) show that, out of 1500 street children only 200 were girls, representing about 13 percent of girls and 83 percent of boys. These figures demonstrate that the argument that the boy child always has an advantage over the girl child when there are challenges in a home is not always true. The generalisation in question is the one responsible for the deafening silence about abuse that boy children and men go through in life in general and in the hands of women. Zimbabweans seem to have swallowed hook line and sinker the argument that men are privileged by African culture and are bent on getting even with men as demonstrated by the fact that under the recently crafted home grown constitution of Zimbabwe men can be sentenced to death but women are exempted from the death sentence regardless of the results of a given court case. It is also curious that in the history of the independent Zimbabwe no male has ever been appointed a minister of any portfolio to do with gender issues. One can be forgiven for speculating that the reason can be that the president of the republic of Zimbabwe was raised by his mother after his father had left his family for Bulawayo and started a new family there. The bitterness of the president of Zimbabwe and his not so positive attitude towards his father and men in general is betrayed by his revelation that he wrote a strongly worded letter to his father and was forced by his uncles to apologise (Southern Eye). The constitution and the appointment of females only to all ministries to do with gender issues shows that men in Zimbabwe are

discriminated against, a practice which weighs heavily against them reporting any abuse by women. Melinda Furguson's remarks are worth concluding this article as they demonstrate that no sex should be taken for granted. The remarks are as follows "It's an illusion that women are all-vulnerable and sensitive, while men are all-macho and logical" [34]. It is in this light that this article submits that the African cultural stance of prescribing how men and women should behave does not oppress women alone but it is also an albatross that weighs heavily on men forcing them to react violently and imprudently to some situations in pursuance of hegemonic masculinity prescriptions.

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