
SEXUAL RIGHTS AND SEXUAL CULTURES: REFLECTIONS ON "THE ZUMA AFFAIR" AND "NEW MASCULINITIES" IN THE NEW SOUTH AFRICA*

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Abstract: *The paper is divided into three sections. The first section focuses on the contested nature of the sexual politics that surrounded the Jacob Zuma rape trial. This sexual politics was not simply the background to the "real" politics of the leadership succession battle between pro-Mbeki and pro-Zuma factions. The rise of sexual politics after apartheid, this paper argues, has largely been due to the politicization of sexuality and masculinity in response to HIV/AIDS. Section two examines the ways in which ideas about "traditional" Zulu masculinity were represented and performed in the Zuma trial, introducing the tension between universalistic sexual rights and particularistic sexual cultures. The third section of the paper is concerned with innovative attempts by a group of young men in Cape Town to create "alternative masculinities" (Connell, 1996) in a time of HIV and AIDS.*

Keywords: *alternative masculinities, AIDS, rape, sexual rights.*

Resumo: *Este artigo encontra-se dividido em três partes: a primeira enfoca a contestada natureza da política sexual que esteve no entorno do julgamento do estupro cometido por Jacob Zuma. Essa política sexual não foi simplesmente a sustentação da "verdadeira" política da luta pela sucessão na liderança das facções pró-Mbeki e pró-Zuma. Este artigo argumenta que o aumento das políticas sexuais depois do apartheid deve-se amplamente à politização da sexualidade e*

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masculinidade em resposta ao HIV e à Aids; a segunda parte examina as formas pelas quais as idéias sobre masculinidade zulu tradicional foram representadas e demonstradas no julgamento de Zuma, apresentando a tensão entre os direitos sexuais universais e as culturas sexuais particulares; a terceira parte preocupa-se com as tentativas inovadoras por parte de grupos de homens jovens na Cidade do Cabo de criar “masculinidades alternativas” (Connel, 1996) nos tempos de HIV e Aids.

Palavras-chave: *Aids, direitos sexuais, estupro, masculinidades alternativas.*

Introduction

For the past few decades millions of people all over the world have been exposed to manuals, pamphlets and curricula material on family planning, reproductive health, STDs, HIV/AIDS awareness, sexual health and so on. As a result, a standardized and universalised body of medico-scientific knowledge on “sexuality” has been disseminated on a global scale. Vincanne Adams and Stacey Leigh Pigg (2005) draw attention to the numerous ways in which modernising projects that claim neutrality and scientific objectivity have embedded “sexuality” within taken-for-granted conceptions of population management, human rights, disease prevention, risk reduction, child survival, and maternal health (Adams; Pigg, 2005, p. 1).¹ These sex and development discourses have attempted to create a universal “normal” sexuality by generating ‘specific procedures for knowing, manipulating, and managing bodies’ Adams; Pigg, 2005, p. 2-3). According to Adams and Pigg (2005, p. 43), a critical analysis of family planning, sex education and HIV/AIDS prevention programmes reveals how these purportedly rational and purely technical interventions reproduce ‘moral assumptions about the purposes of sexual relations and the nature of the person’. These pedagogical and developmental processes are the latest phase in the ‘internationalization of sexology and the sexual sciences’ (Adams; Pigg, 2005, p. 41).

¹ In many respects, Adams and Pigg’s (2005) critical analysis of the sex and development industry is similar to the critiques by Arturo Escobar (1995) and James Ferguson (1990) of technocratic and depoliticising development discourses.

In recent years, there has been a massive explosion of HIV and AIDS prevention and sexual education programmes in developing countries. Major donors and international health agencies such as the Global Fund to fight AIDS, TB and Malaria (GFATM), PEPFAR, the World Health Organisation (WHO) and UNAIDS have provided funding to these global health education programmes. These programmes, like the family planning and reproductive health initiatives that preceded them, have contributed towards reinscribing the idea of “sexuality” as an autonomous and reified domain of social life (Adams; Pigg, 2005, p. 2). These programmes have also resulted in the medicalization of sexual practices and heightened tensions between ‘a sexuality that is universalised and a sexuality that is specific in meaning, practice and outcome’ (Adams; Pigg, 2005, p. 2). New conceptions of sexual rights have also been part of this global traffic in ideas and practices.

The AIDS pandemic in South Africa has opened up questions on sexuality and sexual rights in ways that were unprecedented in the past. Partly as a result of exposure to HIV/AIDS prevention programmes, parents and politicians are increasingly compelled to talk openly about sex in the home and in public domains. Meanwhile gender, gay, AIDS and anti-rape activists have responded to the pandemic by highlighting the need to activate and realise the gender and sexual rights provisions in South Africa’s progressive Constitution. Same-sex marriage laws and anti-sexist legislation, as well as provisions to protect the rights of women, gay and lesbian citizens and people living with AIDS, are all by-products of this progressive post-apartheid constitutional democracy. The constitution, together with grassroots activism, has also contributed towards generating new forms of sexual politics in which concepts such as misogyny, patriarchy, sexism, homophobia and harassment have entered into mainstream public discourse. However, while sexual rights and equality are enshrined in the constitution and accepted within certain sectors of the public, popular responses to gender and sexual equality have also been extremely conservative. In addition, sexual violence in homes and on the streets has reached crisis proportions. So, while activist and public health responses to the AIDS pandemic may have contributed towards a “sexual revolution” in terms of which formerly taboo topics on sex have morphed into morally respectable subjects for discussion and debate in both private and public spaces, this has not always translated into the kinds of progressive sexual rights envisaged by the architects of the constitution. Instead, this constitutionally mandated drive towards sexual equality has catalysed a popular backlash against certain sexual rights. The recent Jacob

Zuma rape trial was an indication of how far this politicisation of sexuality and sexual rights has come.

In a context of entrenched patriarchal cultures, HIV/AIDS and extraordinarily high levels of sexual violence and rape, it is perhaps not surprising that sexual politics should assume such a pivotal position in political discourse in South Africa. The rise of AIDS, gay and gender activism has contributed towards transforming “private” sexual matters into contested public concerns. In addition, like the United States, a conservative reaction to this “sexual revolution” is being fuelled by the rise of Evangelical Christianity and the promotion of moralising discourses on “family values.” This backlash is also being fuelled by President Thabo Mbeki’s promotion of gender equality and his suggestion that the next president should be a woman. These calls for gender and sexual equality have catalysed a conservative mobilisation of discourses on “African tradition” and Christian family values.

This clash of values around sexuality was very evident during Zuma’s trial. During the trial, which was held in the Johannesburg High Court in May 2006, the former Deputy President and his defence counsel argued that the rape accuser had seduced Zuma by wearing “revealing clothes.” The clothing referred to here was the kanga, a traditional African cloth that is worn in villages throughout sub-continent. As the *Mail & Guardian* reporter Nicole Johnston pointed out the African kanga “has been the hallmark of female modesty and respectability [and is] handed out at political rallies emblazoned with slogans and the faces of political leaders” (Johnston, 2006). In the Zuma trial, the mundane cotton kanga was sexualised and transformed into an object of seduction, much like the infamous cigar during the Monica Lewinsky and Bill Clinton scandal. Responding to what they perceived to be a systematic attempt to discredit the rape accuser and portray her as an unscrupulous seducer, gender and anti-rape activists from the People Opposing Women Abuse (POWA) faced jeering Zuma supporters as they demonstrated outside the Johannesburg High Court dressed in cotton kangas. As the journalist Johnston (2006) concluded, they were demonstrating to “re-appropriate their right to wear the kanga – anywhere, any time”. Clearly, sexual politics and sexual rights are on the rise in the post-apartheid public sphere. Yet, as will be discussed later in this paper, the trial can be viewed as an example of the clash between *the universality of sexual rights and the particularities of sexual cultures*.

Sexual rights and the last frontiers of democracy

The Zuma trial and its aftermath included vibrant public debates about sexual rights, morality, religion, culture and political leadership. It was a telling example of the complex and contested character of post-apartheid sexual politics. In a recent article, Eric Fassin (2006) draws attention to the current rise of sexual politics in France and its concomitant decline in the United States. This apparent decline in the United States has followed decades of the politicisation of gender and sexuality, including issues relating to the sexual liberation, the feminist movement, abortion, sexual harassment, gay and lesbian rights and HIV/AIDS. During the 1990s, Clarence Thomas and Bill Clinton were the targets of relentless media attention because the private sexual conduct of a politician was then considered to be politically significant (Fassin, 2006, p. 79). A decade later, according to Fassin (2006, p. 88-89), the sexual conduct of politicians and celebrities had become less important in the United States. For example, Arnold Schwarzenegger was recently elected as California's Governor notwithstanding allegations of sexual harassment. In France, however, sex matters in national politics, and this is amply demonstrated in recent debates on the "Islamic veil," sexual harassment, sexual violence, pornography and prostitution.

Fassin (2006) illustrates this shift in France by showing how French rhetoric on the veil and sexual violence has redefined "the Islamic veil as a symbolic form of rape – male imposition, in opposition to female consent."² He views these developments, which resonate with the kanga debate in South Africa, as part of "the internationalization of sexual politics" (Fassin, 2006, p. 92). Modern democracies, it would seem, are increasingly concerned with questions of sexual equality between homosexuals and heterosexuals, as well as between men

² According to Fassin (2006, p. 88-89), "this sign divides the world into chaste women, who wear the veil, and promiscuous ones, who do not. The former are accused of exposing the latter to rape – not symbolic rape but real rape. Either way, for its critics, there is something intrinsically degrading about the veil: because it represents female sexuality as both indecent and impure, it requires women's desires (and desirability) to be concealed, or otherwise defiled. This suggests that women cannot freely chose to wear a veil; they are victims. But should they feel free to do so, they would become accomplices, guilty of depriving other women of their freedom not to wear one..."

and women. “The politicization of sexuality”, Fassin (2006, p. 92) concludes, “partakes in a broader process of denaturalisation of the social order [and is] therefore an object of democratic debate... This is why sex is the last frontier in the democratic definition of our societies”. This paper reflects on the rise of sexual rights and sexual politics in one of the newest democracies, South Africa. It frames sexual politics in South Africa within the context of public discourses on sex, masculinity and HIV/AIDS. Whereas race and class dominated oppositional politics during the apartheid era, sexual and gender rights now compete for space in the post-apartheid public sphere.

The paper is divided into three sections. The first section focuses on the contested nature of the sexual politics that surrounded the Jacob Zuma rape trial. This sexual politics was not simply the background to the “real” politics of the leadership succession battle between pro-Mbeki and pro-Zuma factions. The rise of sexual politics after apartheid, this paper argues, has largely been due to the politicization of sexuality and masculinity in response to HIV/AIDS. These responses include activist mobilisations and public debates and competing perspectives on AIDS treatment and the official AIDS prevention messages of abstinence (A), be faithful (B) and condomise (C). Section two examines the ways in which ideas about “traditional” Zulu masculinity were represented and performed in the Zuma trial, introducing the tension between universalistic sexual rights and particularistic sexual cultures. It then proceeds to locate hegemonic masculinities within the context of the political and moral economy of sex in contemporary South Africa. The third section of the paper is concerned with innovative attempts by a group of young men in Cape Town to create “alternative masculinities” (Connell, 1996) in a time of HIV and AIDS. It focuses on Khululeka, a Cape Town township-based support group for men living with AIDS. Khululeka, is an offshoot from the AIDS social movement Treatment Action Campaign (TAC). It was formed largely in response to the belief by its founder, Phumzile Nywagi, that township men are “sexually irresponsible” and conspicuously absent from public clinics and HIV/AIDS support groups. Whereas TAC tends to be a predominantly rights-based movement largely comprising women, Khululeka has attempted to address men’s issues, including dominant male sexual cultures. It has sought to fashion new “alternative masculinities” at a time when Africa men are increasingly singled out in the media and popular discourse as the source of sexual violence and HIV infection.

The paper will argue that hegemonic masculinities are beginning to be challenged “from below” by small community-based initiatives such as the Khululeka Men’s Support Group. The paper is specifically also concerned with constructions of dominant “traditionalist” masculinities and innovative re-constructions of these masculinities “from below”.

Section 1: Zooming in on Zuma and sexual cultures in a time of AIDS

The 2006 rape trial of former Deputy-President Jacob Zuma provided the perfect setting for the staging of an extraordinary national drama about sex, gender, morality and political leadership in the new South Africa. Zuma was ultimately acquitted and the rape accuser was portrayed by Justice Willem van der Merwe as a manipulative seductress, a pathological liar and a serial rape accuser. The Judge also lashed out at the media, activists and Zuma supporters for prejudging the case and being more interested in sexual and gender politics than the actual evidence presented in the rape case. The Judge chastised pressure groups, NGOs, governmental organisations and the media for having “breached the *sub judice* rule.” In the preface to his 174 page judgement delivered in the Johannesburg High Court on 4th May 2006, the Judge argued that ‘it is not acceptable that a court be bombarded with political, personal or group agendas and comments. As one contributor to a daily newspaper very correctly put [it]: “This trial is more about sexual politics and gender relations than it is about rape.”’ In his final concluding statement, the Judge also lambasted Zuma for having unprotected sex with an HIV-positive woman and being unable to control his sexual desires. Quoting Kipling, Judge van der Merwe concluded, “If you can control your sexual urges, then you are a man, my son”.

This moralising tone from the Judge, as well as from other quarters, served to unleash angry responses from Zuma’s supporters. For example, in a public statement on the 25th May 2006, Senzeni Zokwana, the president of the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) attacked what he identified as a hypocritical form of “Christian morality” that judged and condemned Zuma for his sexual behaviour. According to Zokwana, not all NUM’s members were Christians, and not all of them adhered to the Ten Commandments’ prohibition on adultery: “We are not Christians. We won’t listen to the Ten Commandments and we don’t have to listen when Christians tell us adultery is wrong.” This statement triggered heated discussions on the Friends of Jacob Zuma (FJZ) website about

the relationship between sexuality, morality, Christianity and the secular state (see <http://www.friendsofjz.co.za>). Pro-Zuma contributors belonging to the trade union movement, the South African Communist Party (SACP) and ANC Youth Leagues supported Zokwana's statement and portrayed Zuma as a "man of the people", a heroic fighter for the liberation of the black working class, the downtrodden and destitute. "Lekua", a vehemently pro-Zuma contributor to the website, defended Zuma's moral integrity, and Zokwana's statement, in a posting on the 25th May, 2006. Lekua's posting, with its binary opposition between Zuma's organic connection to popular classes and Mbeki's association with the educated, modern elite, resonates strongly with a historically inscribed divide amongst Xhosa-speaking people in the Eastern Cape Province between the rural-based "traditionalists" or "red people" (*ababomvu*) (from the custom of decorating body and clothes with ochre) and the urban, "detrified", Christian educated Africans or "school people" (*abaseskolweni*) (see Mayer; Mayer, 1961). This divide, Lekua's website intervention suggests, is expressed through elitist Christian attitudes towards sexuality and morality.

[...] [There is] selective morality, namely that it is alright for a woman to lay a false rape charge but it is uncalled for for JZ to have breached his marriage vows. NUM [Zokwana] said: "NUM does not subscribe to the Ten Commandments, especially the one that says "Thou shall not commit adultery." This hardline stance by Cosatu and its largest affiliate, NUM, clearly shows that the whole nation is getting impatient with the hypocrites who behave as if they are hollier [sic] than JZ and all of us. Their dictatorial tendencies has [sic] inspired the whole nation into action to *reclaim the ANC from the elites and restore it to the masses who are still poor and destitute* [sic]. (emphasis added).(Friends of Jacob Zuma).

Other responses to Zokwana's statement included an article by Dele Olojede and Mfundu Vundla published in the Sunday Times (May 28 2006, p. 21):

Leaders of the youth wing of the ANC deride President Thabo Mbeki as an anti-Zuma conspirator who is out of touch with "the street". They excuse moral laxity [of Zuma], if not outright criminality, as inconsequential in weighing fitness for office. The trade unions say they will not listen to "Christians" lecture them about promiscuity. The communists say gender equality is immaterial, and dismiss the potential of a female president out of hand (Dele Olojede and Mfundu Vundla, 'Black men, white lies: The time has come for the communists and unions to stop hiding behind the fiction of a united [ANC tripartite] alliance.

This public debate on sexual morality was set against the backdrop of a bruising battle between supporters of President Thabo Mbeki and former Deputy President Jacob Zuma. Zuma's supporters believed their leader should become the next President, notwithstanding President Mbeki's dismissal, in 2005, of Zuma from his position as Deputy President. This followed the decision by the prosecuting authority to prosecute Zuma on corruption and, some months later, rape charges. These trials, as well as President Mbeki's calls for the next president to be a woman, were seen to be part of an elaborate anti-Zuma conspiracy orchestrated by the Office of the President.³ The FJZ website had hundreds of postings alleging plots perpetrated by Mbeki's inner circle, the media, big business, neo-liberals, and even "Christians". Intense debates about "the Zuma Affair" took place in the media and on the FJZ website. For example, following Zuma's rape acquittal, Zizi Kodwa, the ANC Youth League's spokesperson, referred to "a brood of fangless vipers in the mass media" (*Mail & Guardian*, May 26, 2006).

Meanwhile, media commentators and gender activists claimed that the trial was a lens onto the rise of an authoritarian and sexist culture of patriarchy, misogyny, and sexual violence. Journalists covering the daily demonstrations outside the Johannesburg High Court reported on Zuma supporters who burnt photographs and effigies of the rape accuser and chanted "burn the bitch". Zuma's supporters, many of whom wore "100% Zulu Boy" T-shirts, were also accused of intimidating anti-rape activists protesting outside the court. The latter had launched a "One in Nine Campaign" to draw attention to the fact that so few women are prepared to report their rapes to the police. Rape activists highlighted the fact that there were 55,000 reported cases of rape in 2004/05

³ Postings on the Friends of Jacob Zuma website also attacked the complainant for falsely accusing Zuma and accused her of being part of an organised political conspiracy to prevent Zuma from becoming the next President. 'Lets be fair' referred to the seven year imprisonment of a Thai woman for making false rape reports and suggested that Zuma's accuser should get similar punishment: "Comrades, we all agree rape is a serious crime and rapists are no better than murderers. What then of women who falsely accuse men of rape?? Should they not be permanently removed from society? A woman who falsely accuses a man of rape is as guilty as a rapist especially when the evidence clearly shows she is a serial false accuser, has been paid to make the accusation and attempted to extort money from the person she falsely accused." – 'Lets be fair', 07/05/2006 (Friends of Jacob Zuma).

whereas the South African Law Reform Commission had provided estimates of 1,69 million rapes per year (*Sunday Independent*, April 16, 2006). Gender activists also questioned the judge's decision to permit the defence to lead testimony on the complainant's sexual history, a decision that activists believed was designed to demonstrate that she had a history of false rape accusations going back to her childhood. The Judge demolished the complainant's evidence, and endorsed Zuma's claim that he had consensual sex at his home in November 2005. Activists argued in the press that the treatment meted out to Zuma's rape accuser from both the Judge and Zuma's supporters would simply reinforce this "one in nine" syndrome amongst rape victims.

After the judgement against the "kanga-clad seductress", gender activists appeared to have even stronger grounds for believing the judicial system would continue to be perceived by rape victims to be unsympathetic to their predicament. Some activists claimed that the relentless cross-examination of the complainant by Zuma's defence lawyer constituted "secondary rape" of the victim by the criminal justice system. Zuma's acquittal, they argued, would also be interpreted by many of his followers as vindication of their patriarchal beliefs and claims that women are predisposed to fabricate rape in order to access money and power.

It was not only the gender activists who were enraged by Zuma's sexual behaviour. Zuma had also angered AIDS activists with his court testimony that he had sex without a condom with an HIV-positive woman because he had calculated that the risk of infection was low. Zuma also told the court that by showering after he had sex with the rape accuser he intended to reduce the risk of infection. According to AIDS activists these statements contributed towards widespread confusion and misinformation about HIV/AIDS, including the proliferation of AIDS myths, dissident theories, and popular beliefs that sex with virgins could cure AIDS and that the disease was caused by witchcraft (Robins, 2004). In his press conference a day after the acquittal Zuma apologised for having made a "mistake" by having "unsafe sex" with an HIV-positive woman. He stated that he would recommit himself to promoting AIDS prevention programmes. Yet, he still sought to justify his shower statement by telling a female journalist, "If you've been in the kitchen, my dear, peeling onions you wash your hands, not so? What's so funny about washing my hands after doing something?" (*Mail & Guardian*, 12 May 2006, p. 31).

Gender and AIDS activists and media commentators argued that Zuma's trial highlighted the patriarchal sexual cultures of South African society. It also

mirrored the dismal failure of the national political leadership to confront sexual violence and HIV/AIDS. After all, Zuma had been the president of both the Moral Regeneration Campaign and the South African National AIDS Commission (SANAC), government bodies that activists regarded as entirely ineffectual. These failures of government were perceived to be especially disturbing in a country with a “rape pandemic” and an estimated 5-6 million people living with AIDS. AIDS activists slammed the national leadership for a series of failures including President Mbeki’s controversial denial of the scale of the pandemic, his questioning of the link between HIV and AIDS, and his support for dissident claims that antiretroviral drugs (ARVs) were dangerously toxic (see Robins, 2004). Similarly, the Minister of Health had infuriated AIDS activists by supporting the dubious AIDS remedies of vitamin manufacturer Dr. Matthias Rath and promoting her own ‘African solution’ for AIDS comprising a diet of garlic, onion, the African potato and olive oil. Zuma’s sexual behaviour and court statements were, from the perspective of activists, yet another leadership blunder. So, notwithstanding a progressive constitution that promised sexual rights and gender equality, as well as health care for all, the sexual and political cultures of both the leadership and the popular classes seemed to stand in the way of realising these rights. The shadow side or underbelly of this progressive constitutional democracy was graphically illustrated in the postings on the Friends of Zuma Website.

The gendered underbelly of South Africa’s constitutional democracy

While Jacob Zuma faced the hostility of the media and gender and AIDS activists, he attracted considerable popular support from the Friends of Jacob Zuma Coalition – an umbrella of organisations including ANC Youth League, the South African Communist Party’s Young Communist League and the Umkhonto weSizwe Military Veteran’s Association. The Friends of Jacob Zuma Trust had also bussed in supporters to the High Court from Zuma’s political support base in KwaZulu-Natal Province. Fundraising concerts and rallies were held in Soweto and other parts of the country. ANC sources claimed that Libyan leader Moammar Gaddafi was funding Zuma’s rape and corruption trials (Letsoala, 2006). Zuma’s support came from a variety of sources including Zulu traditionalists, supporters of patriarchal ideas and practices, African nationalists and ‘the popular Left’. Zuma supporters were particularly upset

with President Mbeki's introduction of quotas for women in political office as well as his call for the next President to be a woman. Mbeki's ANC government was also perceived to be undermining the powers of traditional leaders through local government reform. Demonstrations outside the court included the presence of *iinyanga* (traditional healers) using herbal medicines to ensure that Zuma was successfully acquitted in his trial. Meanwhile chiefs (*amakosi*) dressed in traditional skins occupied the front seats of the courtroom during proceedings.

The Friends of Jacob Zuma Website provides an insight into the conservative underbelly of South Africa's progressive constitutional democracy. It reveals the profoundly conservative character of the gender and sexual politics that animated popular support for Zuma. The following contributions were posted on the website on the days running up to the court judgment on 8th May 2006. They dealt with a number of issues related to the trial, including claims that an Mbeki-led "Xhosa Nostra" had used the rape accuser as a sexual pawn in a political conspiracy to destroy the Zulu-speaking Zuma's prospects of becoming President. Postings also claimed that President Mbeki wanted his female Xhosa-speaking Deputy President, Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, to succeed him in order to prevent Zuma from assuming the mantle of the Presidency when Mbeki stepped down after his second term.

So the president has spoken the next president of RSA should be a "woman". And every one knows that "woman" word read Ngcuka's wife [sic]... Why did this president did not proclaim when he was deputy president that after Mandela, RSA shall have a woman president? He says women are more productive in parliament than men... According to the intelligent Mbeki all men are unproductive and all women are [productive]. When are we going to have a gay or lesbian president? At present I do not see any woman that is ready to rule this country...
- Ndosi, 06/05/2006. (Friends of Jacob Zuma).

These attacks on President Mbeki's call for the next President to be a woman were interspersed with numerous postings about the existence of an Mbeki-led "Xhosa Nostra." These claims that the ANC leadership was dominated by Xhosa-speakers had a long history. Mbeki was also associated with government attempts to undermine the authority of traditional leadership and patriarchal structures, especially in the Zulu-speaking Kwazulu-Natal Province, the stronghold of both Chief Gatsha Buthelezi and Jacob Zuma. The

rape trial was seen by Zuma supporters to be simply the latest manifestation of this pro-woman, anti-male traditionalist “Xhosa conspiracy.”⁴

The ANC was torn down the middle by the sexual politics surrounding the rape trial, and its implications permeated every level of political life from rural villages in KwaZulu-Natal to the top echelons of the ruling party and state institutions.⁵ These developments split the ANC into two factions, those who supported Zuma’s populist leadership and those who supported Mbeki’s more centralist and managerialist approach. The politics of gender and sexuality were very much part of this leadership struggle. The following section draws attention to the ways in which sexual culture featured in the Zuma trial and its aftermath.

Section 2: “Culture talk” and hegemonic masculinities: sexual rights and sexual culture in the new South Africa

Whereas during the liberation struggle and the first decade of democracy (1994-2004) questions of sexuality hardly ever entered public political discourse, Judge van der Merwe believed that media commentators, gender activists and Zuma supporters viewed the trial as being primarily about sexual politics. The trial also reinforced stereotypes about “sexually irresponsible” African men. Such representations of African sexuality had been vehemently contested by President Mbeki. In fact, the President’s AIDS denialism seems to have been fuelled by his belief that AIDS and anti-rape activism reinforced racist ‘western’ ideas about promiscuous and disorderly African sexualities (see Robins, 2004).

⁴ A response from “Vuyo” to an earlier posting (by Musa Nxulu) called upon Zuma supporters to refrain from creating ethnic and tribal tensions and suspicions within the ANC. “Musa Nxulu wena kwedini your problem is that you are tribalist, you believe in the Zulu Nostra, we are not all naive and stupid as not to see that. You painted Xhosas with dirty colours and the unwise words [and now] innocent Xhosas feel rejected and threatened by Blood thirsty hooligans who claim to be Zulu faithfuls. Are you happy? ... Is Jay Z’s [Zuma] court verdict worth innocent lives of Zulu and Xhosa children who played no part in any of this?” – Vuyo in Libode, 02/05/2006 (Friends of Jacob Zuma).

⁵ The Minister of Intelligence, Ronnie Kasrils, was accused by the ANC and South African Communist Party (SACP) Young League leadership of being the shadowy figure behind a political conspiracy engineered by the Mbeki cabal. The Youth League leadership claimed that the rape accuser’s telephone calls to Kasrils a few days after the alleged rape were ample evidence of his complicity in this Mbeki-led conspiracy. Kasrils responded by lashing out at his detractors whom he claimed had not provided any evidence of such a conspiracy.

This was also evident in President Mbeki's attack on the anti-rape activist Charlene Smith. In his weekly letter posted on the *ANC Today website*, the President claimed that Smith's shocking rape statistics reproduced racist stereotypes of black men as habitual rapists. A similar attack was launched by ANC portfolio committee members against filmmaker Cliff Bestall for producing a devastating television documentary on baby rape. While raising these troubling questions about "African sexuality," especially masculinity, had been challenged by the President and ANC national leadership, the Jacob Zuma rape trial appeared to insert sexuality and masculinity squarely within the public sphere.

The Zuma trial placed the intimate details of sex under full public scrutiny. Never before in South Africa had a senior political leader been subjected to such a public investigation of his "private" sexual conduct. Zuma's rape accuser was a 31 year old HIV-positive AIDS activist whose supporters had given her the name "Khwezi" (Star). Khwezi was exposed to ceaseless probing about her sexual history by the defence lawyer. She was questioned about why she wore "revealing clothes" – a kanga without underwear – in the house of Zuma, a father-figure and long time friend of her parents during their years in exile. She told the court that she would never have seduced Zuma, who she referred to as *malume* (father's brother), and whom she claimed to treat like her own father. She also told the court that she was a lesbian and had not been interested in having sex with Zuma. Yet, when she told the court that she had been raped three times as a child, and that she "froze" when she saw the naked Zuma standing with an erect penis next to her bed, the defence countered that if she had been raped so many times she ought to have "developed ways of resisting rape". Why had she not screamed and fought off Zuma's advances, the defence argued. The defence lawyer also argued that a "sane man" would never have committed rape knowing that there was a policeman on the property and that his daughter was sleeping a room in the same house. Zuma's defence counsel called a number of witnesses, including priests and trainee-priests, who claimed that they too had been falsely accused of rape and that that the complainant was a compulsive liar and serial rape accuser. The Judge found the defence witnesses' testimonies to be plausible and ruled against the complainant.⁶

⁶ For the full judgement see *Mail & Guardian* website: <http://www.mg.co.za/specialreport.aspx?area=zuma_report>.

The defence's line argument, a number of media commentators argued, was symptomatic of a broader culture of patriarchy that clashed with a progressive Constitution that promoted gender and sexual equality. What was particularly interesting about trial was the way in which Zuma described his sexual behaviour by drawing on ideas about "African culture."

Sexual culture versus sexual rights?

"Culture" became the keyword in popular and media understandings of "the Zuma affair". Writing about Zuma's dismissal as Deputy President in 2005, the University of the Western Cape political philosopher and media commentator, Anthony Holiday, argued that this signalled the dawning of a new corporate 'culture of competence' in which traditionalism had no place (*Cape Times*, June 27, 2005). Holiday added that Zuma is an African communitarian leader without the access to the kinds of cultural capital and formal education required to thrive in the modern capitalist worlds of 'high finance' and 'high politics.' As he put it, 'Formality had ousted African spontaneity and it was the formality, not of the tribal "Great Place", but of the courtrooms, boardrooms and chancelleries of the "developed" world.' Holiday argued that Zuma did not survive precisely because his brand of African communitarianism was not attuned to the needs and demands of modern democracy and corporate capitalism.

Zuma came across in Holiday's analysis as a Zulu traditionalist whose leadership style is diametrically opposed to the modernist Presidency, Mbeki Inc. Zuma's court appearance during his rape trial in April 2006 seemed to confirm this. He spoke in isiZulu throughout his cross-examination and repeatedly drew on traditionalist idioms and "cultural rules" to buttress the defence's argument that he had consensual sex with the 31-year old woman accusing him of rape. For example, he spoke of how in Zulu culture "leaving a woman in that state [of sexual arousal]" was the worst thing a man could do. "She could even have you arrested and charged with rape," he told the court. He addressed the judge as 'nkosi' – yenkantolo (the king of the court) and referred to his accuser's private parts as isibhaya sika bab' wakhe – her father's kraal. He also conceded that he entered this kraal without ijazi ka mkhwenyana – the groom/husband's coat, or what non-Zulu-speakers would call a condom. These translations of isiZulu idioms are usually associated with "deep" rural KwaZulu-Natal. To those attending the Johannesburg High Court hearing, and millions of others following

the trial through the extensive media coverage, these words signified that Zuma was indeed a “real” Zulu man: “100% Zulu boy” as his supporters’ t-shirts put it.

It was in his discussion of lobola (bridewealth) that Zuma publicly displayed his Zuluness most vividly. In response to questions about two “aunts” who had attempted to initiate lobola negotiations with the complainant, Zuma answered that he would have “had his cows ready”. He claimed that it was not unusual in Zulu custom for a woman who had not had a love-relationship with a man to start lobola negotiations for him. As he put it, “Lobola is an issue between the girl, for instance, and the family. Should she had told these two ladies that ‘Yes, I want Zuma to pay lobola’, I would definitely do it.” Lobola, and patriarchal conceptions of women and sexuality, became the site upon which this claim to Zulu authenticity was played out.

Zuma’s court statements seemed to suggest that he was indeed an authentic Zulu traditionalist, as commentators such as Holiday implied. However, this timeless representation of Zuluness was delinked from the modern legal setting within which this performance of “Zulu culture” was taking place. Zuma’s lawyer, Kemp J. Kemp, no doubt advised him that this approach was strategic and effective in making the case that the sex had indeed been consensual. Zuma’s behaviour was, after all, how Zulu men are meant to act, so this patriarchal argument went. What was important here was that this particular understanding of Zulu masculinity was being self-consciously fashioned and situationally deployed by Zuma in the Johannesburg High Court and in a post-colonial country internationally praised for its progressive, modern constitutional democracy. This situated performance of “Zulu manhood” was also mediated to South Africans and the wider world via television, radio, the Internet and a local and international press fascinated with primordialist fantasies of Zulu culture and sexuality.

This construction of African masculinity was not that different to the ideas about Zuluness and customary law produced by Shepstone and countless other colonial officials. Historians and anthropologists have shown how these historical constructions of “tradition” and “customary law” were produced through ongoing “conversations” between colonial administrators and tribal elders (Channock, 1985; Hamilton, 1998; Mamdani, 1996). In the Johannesburg High Court in May 2006, South Africans witnessed a “postmodern” spectacle in which a tribal elder-cum-liberation struggle icon performed “Zulu tradition” for consumption by both the court and the broader citizenry. This version of “African culture,” which was packaged by Zuma as primordial ethnic essence, was

designed to prop up Zuma's legal defence of consensual sex. This strategy was perceived by his legal team to be effective precisely because South Africa in a postcolonial country in which reified conceptions of African culture carry considerable clout in the courts and on the streets.

The problem with analyses by Tony Holiday and other media commentators is that they failed to recognise that the former Deputy President could represent himself as both a diehard African traditionalist as well as a modern revolutionary and former trade unionist. Neither did these political analysts seem to take cognisance of the fact that Zuma's support base comprises traditional leaders and rural "traditionalists" as well as modernists and scientific socialists within the Communist Youth League, the ANC Youth League and the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU). For Zuma and his supporters within the SACP, ANC, and trade unions, being a 'traditional Zulu man' and a modern revolutionary was neither contradictory nor incompatible. Instead, Zuma's popularity was precisely because of his ability to invent himself as a "man of all seasons" and ideological persuasions, a post-ideological position that straddled the political binaries of Left and Right, modern and traditional. What united his diverse constituency was a particular representation of "traditional" masculinity and conservative sexual politics. This distinguished his culturally hybrid leadership style from strictly corporate executive style and liberal modernism of President Mbeki, a man who promoted gender equity and quotas for women within the ANC and all political structures in the country.

South African political culture has been characterised by competing tendencies: liberal democracy and corporate capitalism on the one side, and African communalism, traditional patriarchy and African socialism on the other. The former draws on liberal modernist ideas about rights and Constitutional democracy, while the latter speaks the language of "African culture" and the communal solidarity of "the masses." These apparently contradictory political logics sometimes collide with each other, but at other times appear to co-exist. Zuma embodies a post-modern political pastiche that seamlessly combines neo-liberal corporate capitalism with patriarchal traditions of African communitarianism. This hybrid cocktail of "Afromodernism" is expressed in Zuma's embrace of reified conceptions of Zulu masculinity alongside his close ties to new corporate elites such Shabir Shaik and his embrace of the popular Left, including the SACP and trade union movement. Yet, notwithstanding Zuma's "100% Zulu boy" court performance, his own life history and struggle affiliations demonstrate that he is comfortable in the roles of both modern revolutionary

and traditionalist elder. This cultural hybridity looks very different to Tony Holiday's binary vision of the "Great Divide" between Zuma the Zulu traditionalist and Mbeki the liberal modernist.

Feminists responding to the Zuma acquittal suggested that it could be a major setback for women's struggles for sexual rights, and could discourage women from reporting rape. It could also have implications that go well beyond sexual violence. For instance, it may signal a shift towards "traditionalist" populism and the reinforcement of patriarchal ideas and practices that are not all that different to the Zulu traditionalist politics of Inkatha in the 1980s. It also has significant implications for court challenges to the implementation of the Communal Land Rights Act (CLRA), an Act that stands to buttress the power of traditional authorities at the expense of rural women. Like the Zuma affair, the CLRA is not simply a clash between modernity and tradition; instead it is a new phase in the modernisation of patriarchal traditionalism and its re-articulation within a modern bureaucratic system, one built upon the legal and political foundations and legacies of colonial policies of indirect rule (Mamdani 1996). Perhaps Zuma is the public face of this post-liberation modernization of patriarchal tradition. The public response to the Zuma trial suggests that this patriarchal regime is being subjected to challenge and contestation from a variety of NGOs, women's movements and the media. The following sections of this paper will argue that this dominant masculinity is also being challenged by small community-based initiatives such as the Khululeka Men's Support Group. The discussion below is concerned with the implications of post-apartheid sexual cultures "from above" as well as innovative cultural constructions of new masculinities "from below".

Historicising masculinities: unmaking patriarchy and remaking sexualities

In 2003 a South African Department of Health Report (Department of Health, 2003, p. 11) entitled *Men in HIV/AIDS Partnership: "Men care enough to act"* reported on a series of consultative workshops in which men identified the following themes and strategies for tackling HIV and AIDS: unequal sexual and gender relations, culture and traditional values such as polygamy, *lobola* (bridewealth) and virginity testing, and gender stereotypes and masculinity. The workshops concluded that there was a need to embark upon education and awareness programmes that targeted young boys from the age of five to eighteen

years in order to “challenge the status quo and the men’s world view” (Department of Health, 2003, p. 11). Despite identifying these strategies and objectives, government has done very little in terms of grappling with these questions of culture, identity and masculinity. Moreover, the Department of Health’s Report demonstrates no attempt to historically contextualize African sexuality and masculinity. The Report restates a stereotypical view of “African sexuality” whereby multi-partner behaviour is understood to be rooted in traditional African beliefs and practices (Caldwell; Caldwell; Orubuloye, 1992; Caldwell; Caldwell; Quiggan, 1989). Similarly, Caldwell, Caldwell and Quiggan (1989) draw on essentialist notions of an “African system of sexuality” – characterised by “sexual networking” and “traditional” sexual permissiveness and promiscuity.

These ahistorical conceptions of “African sexuality” ignore a growing literature on changing historical constructions of African masculinities and sexualities (Cornwall; Lindisfarne, 1994; Delius; Glaser, 2002; Heald, 1995; Hoad; Martin; Reid, 2005; Mark Hunter, 2005, 2006; Mills; Ssewakiryanga, 2005; Moodie, 1994; Morrell, 2001; Niehaus, 2002; Ouzgane; Morrell, 2005; Reid; Walker, 2005; Richter; Morrell, 2006). Recent historical and ethnographic research has critiqued these essentialist ideas of “African promiscuity” (Heald, 1995; Mark Hunter, forthcoming). For example, historians have drawn attention to the existence, in many parts of Africa, of sexual restrictions and stringent rules of respect and avoidance (see Delius; Glaser, 2002). This literature also documents the breakdown of these sexual strictures under historical conditions of underdevelopment and poverty (Ouzgane; Morrell, 2005). For example, Margrethe Silberschmidt (2005, p. 200) argues that socio-economic change and poverty in East Africa since the 1980s have produced new forms of male disempowerment that have often resulted in violence and sexual aggressiveness. This male sexuality, Silberschmidt argues, has “become fundamental to a process of restoring male self-esteem” in times of unemployment and the failure of men to meet their expected social roles as heads of households, fathers and breadwinners. In other words, these are not static models of traditional African patriarchy and male domination. Recent studies in southern Africa draw attention to similar processes and changing constructions of masculinities (Heald, 1995; Mark Hunter, 2005, 2006; Jewkes; Abrahams, 2002; Niehaus, 2005; Ouzgane; Morrell, 2005; Reid; Walker, 2005; Richter; Morrell, 2006; Wood; Jewkes 2001).

Mark Hunter’s (2006) work in rural KwaZulu Natal focuses on changes in the “political economy of sex” that are partly responsible for fuelling the

South Africa AIDS pandemic. Hunter challenges stereotypes that blame AIDS on “African culture.” He also questions political economy approaches that attribute the pandemic primarily to legacies of racial capitalism and apartheid and the destruction of African family structures through the system of circular male-migration. While not denying the historical role of apartheid in undermining African family structures, Hunter’s work highlights relatively recent changes to the political economy of sex. He shows how, since the 1970s, dramatic changes in cultures of sexuality have occurred as a result of the combination of rising social inequalities, structural unemployment, greatly reduced marital rates and new forms of domestic and sexual fluidity (see Spiegel, 1995 on domestic fluidity). These developments have rendered both men and women more vulnerable. Studies suggest that the combination of male disempowerment and chronic poverty has, in certain cases, contributed towards aggressive male sexualities, which has in turn fuelled the spread of the pandemic (Hunter, 2006; Wood; Jewkes, 2001). These developments have also introduced changes in female sexuality, including forms of transactional sex for both survival and to support modern consumer lifestyles and identities (Mark Hunter, 2006; Leclerc-Madlala, 2004).

Historians and anthropologists have also shown that in the past, in many parts of Africa, there were highly structured and culturally mediated ways in which young people were initiated into adulthood and adult forms of sexual activity (see Delius; Glaser, 2002; Mark Hunter, 2006; Monica Hunter, 1936). For example, during the nineteenth century in parts of southern Africa, penetrative sex, fathering and fatherhood were linked to building a home (Mark Hunter, 2006). In Zulu-speaking parts of South Africa the *umuzi* (homestead) was headed by an *umnumzana* who could, depending on the resources available, marry polygamously. The sons of the *umnumzana* would later marry and break away from their father’s *umuzi* in order to establish their own. Women moved from their father’s lineage to their husband’s through the giving of *ilobola*, usually cattle. *Lobola* was less a form of ‘bride price’ than it was a ‘child-price’ – an exchange for woman’s reproductive capacity, i.e., her ability to produce birth. In such a system, sex amongst young people was highly structured and *ilobola* regulated when young men had the right to marry and have children. Having children without having these ‘sexual rights’ would result in the young man’s family having to pay *inhlahulo* or damages for impregnation.

These cultural practices were subject to rapid and dramatic social change. In the early decades of the twentieth century, when increasing numbers of

young men began to migrate to South African cities to search for work, they gained some independence in terms of *ilobola* payment. This allowed them to build their own families and homesteads without having to rely on their fathers' permission and help. However, with the decline of the migrant labour system since the 1970s it has become increasingly difficult for young men in Southern Africa to find permanent jobs. This era of structural unemployment has in turn made it extremely difficult for young men to pay *ilobola* and thereby get 'properly married.' These dramatic changes are of course not confined to South Africa but are being experienced in many parts of sub-Saharan Africa.

Responses to these changing structural conditions of everyday life are often interpreted through the lens of ahistorical stereotypes about a singular "African sexuality." This is certainly the case in media reporting on men and HIV/AIDS. Liz McGregor's (2005) *Khabzela: The Life and Times of a South African* is a powerful and honest attempt to account for the life and death of Fana Khaba, a young Soweto man who, in his prime as a popular Yfm radio DJ, died of AIDS on the 14th January 2004 at the age of thirty-five. *Kabzela* is a moving account of a young man from a poor family in Soweto whose celebrity status fuelled his sexually promiscuous lifestyle. He was hailed as a hero for 'coming out' on radio about his HIV-positive status. However, he could not come to terms with his HIV seropositive status, and he stopped taking anti-retrovirals after visiting 'alternative healers' and *sangomas* (traditional healers or diviners). After being visited by an "emissary" from the South African Health Minister, he opted for an 'African solution' that included a diet of garlic, onion, potato and olive oil. He died shortly thereafter. McGregor's sensitive account of Khabzela's life and death, like Zuma's trial, raises difficult questions concerning hegemonic masculinities and sexual cultures. It is this question that animates the work of Khululeka, a men's support group in Cape Town.

Section 3: 'Brothers are doing it for themselves': from social movement to men's support group

The Oscar award winning South African film *Tsotsi* tells the story of a fearless and violent township gangster who, as young boy, ran away from home after his abusive father refused to let him near his mother who was dying of AIDS; the father believed that his son could be infected by touching his HIV-positive mother. One day Tsotsi shoots a black woman while hijacking her car

outside her middle class suburban home. As he speeds off from the house in the woman's BMW he hears a baby crying in the back seat of the car. He eventually decides to take the baby to his township house and this dramatically changes his life. Through trying to care for the infant, Tsotsi goes on a road to Damascus conversion process, and he decides to return the infant to its parents. The film ending hints that he decided to turn his back on crime and gangsterism. This redemptive storyline also suggests that even violent young men may be amenable to radical change and reform. It also hints that fatherhood can become a catalyst for the construction of new "responsible masculinities." It also contests popular and media images of young black men as the source of the problem of HIV/AIDS, domestic violence and rape. Tsotsi's redemptive narrative resonates with the stories of young men living with AIDS who have sought to transform their lives as a result of illness experiences and their recognition of the need to lead healthy and sexually "responsible" lifestyles and assume the "proper" social roles of fatherhood.

In a recent conversation with Phumzile Nywagi,⁷ a forty-three year old AIDS activist, he told me that these days Xhosa initiation rituals are unable to teach young men to act responsibly. He claimed that most young men were "useless and irresponsible", and that they went to initiation school but then continued being irresponsible when they returned from the bush. He concluded that he preferred counselling women, because they took HIV and AIDS very seriously:

You know, initiation as it is, it doesn't mean anything nowadays. Its just pain, it seems. It doesn't give any way forward to life. One would just go initiation for the sake of going there. But not knowing the concept traditionally, how our rituals [demand] that you have to change your lifestyle, to know yourself. But other people out there, one would go to initiation and come and do the same thing that he used to do. I mean there don't seem to be regulations around sex. I mean young people can sleep around with who they want. Or am I wrong? The church may say things, but do people listen. Parents may say one thing, but do they listen. Is there any authority, or is it the case that it's anarchic, and youth can do as they want?⁸

⁷ Taped interviews with Phumzile Nywagi were done in Cape Town on 15th September 2005 and 4th October 2005. I also engaged with Phumzile over a number of years and thank him for his friendship, insights, courage and generosity. After reading an earlier draft of this paper, Phumzile encouraged me to use his real name rather than a pseudonym. He pointed out that since he is living openly with the HI-virus it did not make sense to disguise his identity.

⁸ Taped interview with Phumzile Nywagi, Cape Town, 1 September 2005.

In September 2005, Phumzile Nywagi, a former Treatment Action Campaign (TAC) and *Medicins san Frontières* (MSF) AIDS activist, established Khululeka Men's Support Group in Gugulethu, a working class Xhosa-speaking township in Cape Town. It is one of a handful of support groups in South Africa that focus specifically on men's issues. Khululeka was started in response to Phumzile's observation that men were virtually invisible in community health clinics and AIDS support groups. All of the members of this group were open about their seropositive status, and their aim was to provide "safe sex" education and treatment literacy in the communities in which they lived. In addition, since most of Khululeka's members were unemployed, the group wanted to develop opportunities for skills training and job creation.

The members of Khululeka regarded men as their primary target in their efforts to challenge AIDS stigma and promote healthy lifestyles and "safe sex" practices. They also tackled how problems of unemployment, poverty, and HIV impacted on men's sense of identity and dignity. According to Phumzile, "When you are HIV-positive, and on top of that you are unemployed, you can lose everything. Your wife and children don't respect you because you are sick, without a job and now you cannot provide for them. You are nobody. You are useless. This is why we have created Khululeka, to help men discover their manhood and dignity again." "Themba", another Khululeka member stated the following: 'We saw that men were nowhere to be seen at support groups and clinics. They only visit clinics when they are seriously ill. They also sleep around, drink and smoke too much, and this is problem when you take ARVs. This is why we decided we need to work with men.'

Khululeka is a Xhosa word for 'freedom', 'to be free', or, as Phumzile put it, 'It means to feel free to talk about HIV.' The support group comprised a group of twenty young men, many of who had participated in MSF and TAC antiretroviral (ARV) treatment programmes in Khayelitsha, Cape Town. All of the members lived openly with HIV, and spoke about how disclosure allowed one to 'feel free' and that this strengthened one and made one better equipped, both physically and psychologically, to deal with HIV and AIDS. According to Vuyisa, "AIDS is just a mind game" and unless you develop the right psychological attitude you will be broken down and lose all strength and hope.

HIV is just a mind game. But if you treat it like any other disease, like TB, then you can challenge it and do like you are now. If you are diagnosed, your first thought is you will die. But now it is different – we have ARVs. Now behaviours need to

change and so do life styles. ... My dreams vanished when I was diagnosed. When I was first diagnosed, I couldn't wash myself, walk or feed myself... It was as if you are turned around back into being a baby...

Khululeka was involved in numerous community based activities, including AIDS awareness and sex education campaigns in public spaces such as township *shebeens* (taverns), railway stations and taxi ranks, on community radio talk shows, and at funerals of people who died of AIDS. They were also involved in collecting money for families that were unable to pay funeral costs, and visited HIV-positive people in hospitals and their homes. The group's meeting place was a Rotary Club-funded shipping container in the backyard of Phumzile's house in Gugulethu. They also had outings and *braais* (barbecues) where they socialised and discussed matters of common concern.

Khululeka emerged in the context of the double burden of HIV/AIDS and structural unemployment. Studies suggest that in the past young men stood a much better chance of gaining access to formal employment that allowed them to pay *ilobola* (bridewealth) and thereby marry, have children, and establish relatively stable family households. During the past three decades, however, dramatically rising rates of unemployment (currently estimated to be 30-40%) have made this life cycle trajectory increasingly difficult to achieve. This has in turn undermined the ability of young men to assume the social roles of fatherhood. Mark Hunter (2006, p. 106) observes that many Zulu-speaking men in KwaZulu-Natal are abandoning pregnant women because of conditions related to poverty and unemployment. Many of these men are extremely frustrated at not being able to conform to accepted social roles of fatherhood, including paying *inhlawulo* (damages for impregnation), *ilobolo* (bridewealth), and acting as a 'provider'. This creates conditions whereby manliness is partially boosted by *fathering* children, but at the same time those men who are unable to fulfil the social roles associated with *fatherhood* are branded as unmanly and 'irresponsible' (Mark Hunter, 2006). One of the reasons for the establishment of *Khululeka* was to address these obstacles to social reproduction and enhance the capacity of men to fulfil these social roles of fatherhood. *Khululeka* also aims to promote AIDS awareness and 'responsible lifestyles.'

Support groups such as *Khululeka* are attempting to address some of these issues. They are also involved in mediating new scientific and medical knowledge and technologies (i.e., anti-retroviral therapy or ART) as well as new forms of 'responsibilised' citizenship that are deemed to be necessary for

treatment adherence and ‘safe sex’ to take root. Two *Khululeka* members were trained as treatment literacy practitioners by TAC and MSF, and one of them was able to find employment as an AIDS counsellor for a medical insurance company. For *Khululeka*’s members, being permanent volunteer activists was no longer financially viable. Most of the men were between thirty and forty years old and were keen to establish stable families. Having managed to come to grips with their sero-positive status, and having accepted the reality of life-long commitment to ARV treatment, they turned their attention to the challenges of acquiring skills so that they could find permanent employment and formalise their relationships through marriage. For many their hope was to find work as state paid AIDS treatment literacy practitioners, patient advocates and councillors within the public health sector. These concerns to secure employment did not preclude commitment to fighting AIDS denial and lack of knowledge about HIV and ARV treatment in their communities.

Khululeka is an innovative off-shoot of the South African AIDS activist movement, but it departs in significant respects from the organisational forms and objectives of TAC and MSF. Whereas TAC comprises 90 percent women, *Khululeka* is one of a small number of men’s support groups in South Africa. It focuses exclusively on working class African men, a social group that tends to avoid interacting with the public health system. Public clinics in South Africa tend to be ‘women’s spaces,’ and men arrive at clinics only when they are seriously ill and ‘disappear’ once they have been treated. In many cases HIV-positive men come in for the treatment of opportunistic infections such as TB and pneumonia, and vanish before they can be properly counselled and prepared for life-long anti-retroviral therapy (ART). Poor drug adherence has become a particularly worrying trend given the very real dangers of drug resistance. *Khululeka* seeks to address these problems by acknowledging men’s specific desires, needs and vulnerabilities.

Illness narratives, treatment testimonies and new sexualities

Recognising the dangers posed by drug resistnace, South African public health professionals and AIDS activists argue that rights to health care need to be complemented by ‘responsible’ medication adherence and sexual behaviour and healthy and stress-free lifestyles. This is also part of a shift from popular struggles over access to treatment to concerns with the demand for (“uptake”)

health care, health system responsiveness and secondary and tertiary prevention. From these public health perspectives, what is needed for AIDS treatment and prevention programmes to succeed is both a well-run and responsive public sector health system and empowered, knowledgeable and “responsibilised” client-citizens. Public health professionals and activists are in fact calling for an effective health system together with new forms of community participation and citizenship, or what Arjun Appadurai (2002 describes as ‘governance from below.’ It is these concerns that are at the heart of the focus of MSF, TAC and Khululeka on innovative community-based initiatives in sex education, treatment literacy and social and economic support for people living with AIDS. These approaches have created the conditions for the emergence of new social identities, including the new masculinities that seem to be emerging as a result of community-based initiatives such as Khululeka.

MSF, TAC and Khululeka all subscribe to this “governance from below” approach, yet they are also quite different in their social composition and orientation. MSF is a global NGO of health professionals, TAC a national organization led largely by professionals with popular participation mostly by unemployed black African women, and Khululeka is a grassroots CBO of unemployed and working class Xhosa men led by someone with tertiary education and employment.⁹ Notwithstanding these differences, all three organisations have been involved in common AIDS activist projects and approaches that have created the conditions for the emergence of new social identities, including the new masculinities that seem to be emerging as a result of community-based initiatives such as Khululeka. It would seem that these new masculinities and identities are very much in the making and draw on more established ideas about masculinity. In other words, these ideas about sexuality and masculinity are still in the process of being fleshed out and negotiated.

The following quote illustrates how the reinterpretation of the virus by Khululeka members has become a catalyst for the emergence of post-apartheid political struggles and generated new forms of participation. During a group discussion with Khululeka members in Gugulethu on 18th February 2006, “Thabo”, a forty-something year old former ANC liberation fighter described how diagnosis

⁹ Chris Colvin drew my attention to the significance of these differences in relation to the “governance from below” issue.

with AIDS could destroy one's sense of manhood and hope for the future. He recalled that after his diagnosis he had had virtually no support, "Even my brothers wouldn't support me." Thabo described how he had left South Africa in 1982 to enlist with Mkhonto we Sizwe, the military wing of the ANC. He returned to South Africa in 1994, and in 2003 became very ill and decided to be tested for HIV. He interpreted his involvement in AIDS activism as another struggle for dignity:

I decided to get tested for HIV when I got TB in 2003. It wasn't nice to be ill. I didn't know what will happen after the diagnosis. All of my problems started after I began disclosing my status. I first told my brother, but he betrayed my trust by telling all of his friends. It is one's right to keep one's status private. But I needed to disclose my status... For me, HIV is another campaign. The first battle was for racial equality – to be treated like a man, though one is black... Everyone must be tested because the virus has no colour...

"Thabo" explained how illness, AIDS stigma, and the fear of dying were a devastating concoction, especially for African men whose identity was intimately tied to sexuality and reproduction:

Especially here in Africa, sexual issues are men's pride. Here as an Africa man you are being judged according to how many women you have. I mean especially among young ones, it's very rare that you find a young man having one girlfriend, for example. Most of the time... men marry more than one wife... Every man judges his future and well being according to the size of his family [laughter from others in the room]. So the doctor says, "My friend, I'm very sorry you're HIV-positive.' So you just have to stop everything. Imagine that. This makes a vacuum in somebody's heart [laughter]. All the plans you have are gone. So you find out you are HIV-positive and you say, "I am no longer a man, I have to do away with all my girlfriends.' So this is when the fear and stigma starts. Many people believe that if you're HIV-positive you only have a period of 3 or 5 years and then you're gone [laughter]. And you had all these plans...

Other comments about men, sex and HIV that emerged from the discussion with Khululeka members included the following

Men don't' come out openly [about their status]. They are not like women, they are usually scared. This is the purpose of a men's support group. We

talk together about things we cant' discuss with female partners.
 Some men want to sleep around to feel stronger.
 Most men thought that having sex with women was a necessity, but sexual activity generally decreased after diagnosis.
 Men often expect to have sex without a condom because they have "paid" for their wives through lobola [bridewealth].
 I often ask "Where are the guys in support groups and treatment literacy meetings?" I ask women where their partners are. Many say that they have left them.
 Domestic violence is done by us... We are trying to change.
 Black men have been oppressed – they lack jobs, housing, shelter, which leads to a higher risk of encountering other social ills such as prostitution...
 This is not a colour question. It is about poverty and traditions.
 For me, it is very strange to tell my sexual issues to a woman.

In the case of many Khululeka members the devastating experiences of HIV illness, stigma and fear were lessened by joining Khululeka. In interviews with Phumzile it became clear that he too had been through similar illness experiences. In fact, the MSF's Dr. Eric Goemaere recalled that when Phumzile was carried into the MSF clinic in Khayelitsha in 2000 he already had full-blown AIDS, and was close to dying. Elsewhere I have argued that it was this kind of illness experience, followed by ARV treatment and immersion in AIDS activism and support group activities, can under certain conditions contribute towards a dramatic transition from "near death" to "new life" (Robins, 2006). The following illness narrative and treatment testimony by Phumzile illustrates the power of these socio-biological processes and how they can contribute towards new HIV-positive identities that include new conceptions of masculinity and sexuality.

"I am like a born-again... ARVs (antiretrovirals) are now my life"

Phumzile is a former TAC and MSF activist living with AIDS in his early forties. In 2001 he became desperately ill. He had headaches and dizziness, he suffered from thrush and a range of other opportunistic infections, he had lost almost 30 kilograms, his CD4 count was down to 110, his viral load was 710 000, he could not walk, he was barely conscious at times. He secluded himself

in a room in his sister's house waiting for death. Dr. Eric Goemaere, the MSF doctor at the Khayelitsha clinic that Phumzile attended, recalled that Phumzile was "nearly dead" when he was carried into the clinic' (personal communication, February 2006). On November 12 2001, he became one of the first fifty clients to participate in MSF's ART programme in Khayelitsha. His recovery was dramatic: after six months his viral load had dropped to 215 000, his CD4 went up and he was feeling much stronger. When I met Phumzile in 2004, his viral load was undetectable and his CD4 count was 584.

Clinical indicators such as normal CD4 counts and undetectable viral loads do not adequately convey the social, psychological and spiritual recovery that Phumzile and others have experienced on their journeys from "near death" to "new life". Neither do these indicators account for why Phumzile, viewed HIV as "a blessing in disguise." For Phumzile, getting his life back through ART was a gift from God that he could not afford to squander.

I'm not a church-goer [but] my faith comes from the time I got sick... In the bible there is the story of a sick beggar on the road. Jesus comes by and tells the beggar to stand up. And he stands up. The miracle of Jesus revived him from death so that he could heal other people through the belief that Jesus is on earth. Faith is in yourself. If you don't believe in yourself, who do you believe in? God brought me back to life for a purpose. He wants me to go out there and talk to people. He's giving me another chance. A day could cost me a lot if I don't speak about HIV... *I am like a born-again.* ARVs, that's where my commitment comes from. It's like committing yourself to life because the drugs are a lifetime thing. ARVs are now my life. If I did not ignore life I would not be on ARVs...

At the TAC national congress in Durban in 2003, before the announcement of the national ARV rollout, I witnessed TAC members giving impromptu testimonies of their treatment experiences. Each highly charged treatment testimony was followed by outbursts of song, dance and struggle chants: 'Long live, Zackie, long live. Long live, TAC, long live.' Phumzile Nywagi's input at the TAC congress in Durban captured the flavour of these testimonies:

I'm Phumzile from Cape Town in the Western Cape. I was diagnosed in 2001... I was very sick. When you get sick, you just ignore it. You say: "Oh, it's just the flu." You're in the denial stage. You say your neighbour is a witch ... We thought this disease belonged to other people elsewhere in Africa. From my point of view, HIV is real, it's here. I never thought I would be here today. I couldn't stand, I was

sick. My CD4 count was 110 and my viral load was 710 000. Then I started ARVs with MSF in Khayelitsha. Now I'm strong... (Phumzile, forty-two year old male AIDS activist and founder of *Khululeka*).

These treatment testimonies – with their references to CD4 counts, viral loads and the role of TAC in giving them “new life” – have a quasi-religious quality. They also express the sense of personal empowerment that comes from having survived the passage from “near death” (i.e., full-blown AIDS) to recovery (Robins, 2006). As will be argued below, this passage from illness to health can also serve as a catalyst for the construction of new HIV-positive identities and new masculinities.

Concerns about how to establish and maintain a stable and cohesive family in times of AIDS and widespread unemployment also featured prominently in discussions with Phumzile. He spoke about how, following his diagnosis, he had suicidal thoughts, ‘But then I thought about my children, and what it would be like for them to grow up without a father.’ He claimed that even though he had separated from his first wife, his illness had in fact strengthened his relationship with his children. He wanted to provide them with fatherly direction and support. Having got his life back through ARVs, Phumzile was determined to build a future for himself and his family. He remarried an HIV-positive woman and their infant recently tested sero-negative. He was employed as a tele-counsellor for HIV-positive clients belonging to a medical insurance company, and the men’s support group he had started was growing. Looking back on his life, Phumzile spoke about how he had erred by not taking life, and the threat of HIV, more seriously. He claimed that his lifestyle of “sexual recklessness” and “womanising” had led to his HIV-positive status and illness. Given his illness experiences, he was determined to be a responsible father and to teach his children to value life:

[...] I used to take things for granted. I used to ignore things. I used to not to care. I'd say, ‘That won't happen to me.’ The way I see things now is very much different. That if you don't think of tomorrow, you are nothing. You know, if you don't think of your future, or the people out there, or your kids. That was my major problem. Now I realise my kids wouldn't love to live without their father. Even if I am not staying with them, I must give moral support, give them life, and give them direction to life. So, that's what I'm doing right now. Its time to put my feet on the ground and change the way I see things... At the age of forty you find out that [you] have wasted many years along the way there, doing nothing at all. Not

focusing on the right way to succeed. Not having the vision that sometime I could have my own house, my own children, my own car, have a good job, be a father... It's very hard these days, given unemployment and lack of opportunities [but] you have to have a vision...

After Phumzile had returned to health through ARV treatment he was able to start the long process of remaking his life, both in terms of his family and personal lifestyle and in relation to his contribution to his community. New conceptions of manhood and sexuality were key aspects of this process of identity construction.

Beyond rights? Concluding reflections on sexual politics and alternative masculinities

The aftermath of the Zuma Affair(s) threatened to completely unravel the liberation movement-cum-ruling party's historical alliance and political solidarity with the SACP and COSATU. This vicious succession battle was expressed through a cultural politics of gender and sexuality that reflected profound tensions between constructions of "traditional" African masculinity and a rights-based discourse on sexual rights and gender equality. While it appeared as if these concerns were simply background to the "real" politics of the ANC leadership crisis, this paper has argued that the rising significance of sexual rights and sexual politics animated the tensions between the pro-Mbeki and pro-Zuma camps. The reasons for this is that sexual and gender rights have, over the past decade, increasingly become a key theme in South African national political discourse. This has largely been due to the politicization of sexuality and gender as a result of public scrutiny and criticism of the government's responses to AIDS. This paper has also argued that in the shadows of the national political drama surrounding Zuma's trial were innovative localised attempts by men living with AIDS to create alternative masculinities and "responsible" sexual behaviour in a time of AIDS. While the Khululeka Men's Support Group may appear to be an isolated community-based initiative, it reveals that there are indeed local challenges to hegemonic masculinities in post-apartheid South Africa. These community-based initiatives are also linked to the work of post-apartheid social movements such as the TAC. Although these initiatives are linked to rights-based struggles they also go beyond rights by seeking to create new communities, identities and cultures of masculinity and sexuality.

The story of Khululeka also reveals how, community activism can, under certain conditions, contribute towards the “conversion” of HIV-positive people into committed and “responsibilised” citizens (see Robins, 2006). The paper has suggested that these community-based initiatives can contribute towards the renegotiation and reinvention of South African masculinities and cultures of sexuality in a time of AIDS. They can also offer alternatives to the kinds of “traditional” African masculinities performed by Jacob Zuma in the Johannesburg High Court in May 2006.

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