

**From ‘Mother of the Nation’ to ‘Lady Macbeth’: Winnie Mandela and Perceptions of Female Violence in South Africa, 1985-1991**

Emily Bridger

*‘In the same way as you have had to bury our children today, so shall blood of our fallen heroes be avenged!’<sup>1</sup>*

- Winnie Mandela<sup>2</sup>, 1985.

Winnie Mandela’s personal history is familiar to many. Following her marriage to Nelson Mandela in 1958, and his subsequent imprisonment in 1964, she became not only Mandela’s assumed spokesperson but also a political activist in her own right. Over the following decades she suffered a number of abuses at the hands of the apartheid state: she was banned from attending meetings or giving speeches; she was imprisoned for 491 days (the majority of which was spent in solitary confinement); and in 1977 she was banished to the Free State town of Brandfort, located over 200 miles away from her home and political base. In defiance of her banning orders, Winnie Mandela returned to her marital home in the township of

Soweto in 1985 - a homecoming that coincided with the most sustained period of rebellion in South Africa's recent history. A state of emergency was in effect, as the youth engaged in an open revolt against the state's security forces. Violence, inflicted for both personal and political reasons, had become pervasive, and to a large extent an unavoidable feature of township life.

Winnie Mandela became an emblematic figure to many South Africans at this critical juncture and frequently voiced her opposition to the apartheid state by speaking at funerals and political rallies. She was particularly well known for her fierce advocacy of militant action in making townships 'ungovernable' and toppling the apartheid regime, which earned her widespread approbation, particularly from the militant youth now in the forefront of the struggle. While her speeches were commonly infused with revolutionary rhetoric, her discourse also emphasised her identity as a mother, not just to her own children but to the community as a whole, by making repeated references to the suffering of children and women's maternal duty to protect against and even avenge this suffering.

When she spoke as a militant and a mother Winnie Mandela was not inventing a new discourse, but drawing on a strong tradition of maternal militancy in South Africa and abroad. While women are traditionally equated with peacekeeping and nurturing roles, during times of conflict they can attain social sanction for their participation in protest or militant activity by working within traditional gender ideology and emphasising their maternal duties to protect, support, or avenge their children – a strategy termed ‘motherism’ by Temma Kaplan and referred to here as ‘militant motherhood’.<sup>3</sup> In South Africa, motherism had long been the first point of entry for women across multiple ethnicities and affiliations into the political realm. Yet Winnie Mandela employed the discourse of militant motherhood in ways that were novel in the South African case. First, she promoted a more assertive and less traditional role for women in her defiance of gender norms and male authority, subsequently redefining her relationship with men through politics and showing other women they could do the same. Second, she not only talked about militancy but also physically embodied it in her actions and relationships with township youth. For this, she was greatly admired by many Soweto residents, particularly politicised

women and militant youth, and remains revered as the ‘mother of the nation’ to many involved in the struggle today.

However, between 1986 and 1989 Winnie Mandela became embroiled in a number of controversies regarding her relationship with violence. First, in an infamous speech in 1986 she seemed to endorse ‘necklacing’ – a particularly brutal form of execution notoriously used against suspected informers in South African townships in the 1980s. Second, from late 1986 onwards, she became matriarch to the Mandela United Football Club (MUFC), a group of male youths who quickly transitioned from township football team to notorious gang, carrying out a ‘reign of terror’ in Soweto in which they were implicated in a number of murders, abductions, arsons and rapes.<sup>4</sup>

These incidents raised serious questions regarding Winnie Mandela’s status as an iconic struggle leader and a national mother figure, as her actions contravened both acceptable notions of violence carefully set out by anti-apartheid organisations and the perceived norms of ‘good’ motherhood. Public reactions to Winnie Mandela during these years were varied, often depending on one’s race, gender, and age. Yet

many of the ways in which she was criticised were distinctly shaped by gendered discourses of female violence. As she became engaged in a type of violence far removed from the bounds of acceptable female behaviour, she was increasingly portrayed by the media not as the 'mother of the nation' but as a murderous monster more akin to Lady Macbeth. The study of Winnie Mandela thus highlights the salience of traditional images of women as peaceful and incapable of violence in contemporary times. Yet this article simultaneously demonstrates that women are not constantly confined by these stereotypes, but can at times work within them and exploit patriarchal views to achieve a variety of aims. Throughout the period under discussion in this article, Winnie Mandela repeatedly centred her public persona around her identity as a mother; first, in order to highlight how her maternal duties mandated her militant engagement with the apartheid state; and later in order to deny the accusations laid against her while on trial by arguing that a mother inherently predisposed to peaceful behaviour couldn't possibly have committed the atrocities of which she was accused.

Winnie Mandela's case thus illuminates both the potentials and pitfalls of motherhood as an identity for women looking to engage in the public sphere, and

underscores the need for a more complex understanding of the relationship between women, militancy, and violence. This article neither seeks to uncover the truth behind Winnie Mandela's suspected crimes, nor make an empirical judgement on her use of violence. It focuses on the particular historical period from 1985 to 1991, during which Winnie Mandela made a clear transition from 'mother' to 'monster' in public discourse. Accordingly, her continued public prominence since 1991, including her appearance before the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, her ascendancy within the ANC Women's League, and reactions to Mandela's death in 2013 are outside the scope of this article.<sup>5</sup>

In exploring societal perceptions of female militancy and violence, this article analyses the discourse used by Winnie Mandela and her various audiences by drawing on media reports and oral history interviews, in addition to the scarce archival evidence available. The ability of oral sources to unveil voices previously 'hidden from history' is unrivalled by any other methodology. This advantage is especially notable in Africa, where colonialism and authoritarian rule have obscured the histories of much of the continent's population and left persistent paucities in archival records, particularly in regards to women's voices. While the methodology

has been criticised as a subjective and unreliable window onto the past, its practitioners have responded by emphasising the subjective nature of all historical sources derived from human testimony, whether oral or written. Furthermore, by listening to oral testimony against the grain, and interpreting the meanings of silences, secrets, and subtext, historians can gain unique insight into the subjective meanings of history: what is remembered, by whom, and, most importantly, why.<sup>6</sup>

The interviews cited below form a selection from a wider body of oral history research conducted in South Africa between 2013 and 2015 with former youth activists, examining broader issues of gender and youth politics in the 1980s. All interviewees cited were political activists resident in Soweto in the 1980s and 1990s. Their opinions by no means represent a countrywide consensus. However, their recollections provide access into the historical consciousness and subjective memories of activists who comprised some of Winnie Mandela's most unwavering supporters, while also providing insight into the connections between past and present memories.<sup>7</sup> The media sources used in this article, are also highly subjective: they may contain inaccuracies due to time constraints; they may have sensationalised events; and are inevitably censored to some extent. In Winnie

Mandela's case, her gender, race, fame, and assumed involvement in violence encouraged particularly sensationalist reporting of her actions and rhetoric, as her contravention of both the law and expected female behaviour earned her disproportionate media attention.

### **The Militant Mother**

As a number of scholars have demonstrated, South African women throughout the twentieth century used their maternal responsibilities to justify their untraditional political engagement in the struggle against apartheid.<sup>8</sup> Following the extension of pass laws (under which blacks had to carry passport-like documents as a means of controlling their urbanization and movement) to African women in 1956, female protestors linked their objections to passes to their responsibilities as mothers: for what would happen to children if women were arbitrarily detained or arrested for infringing pass laws?<sup>9</sup> Angered by state attacks against children in Soweto in 1976, African women once again 'transformed and infused the ideology of motherhood with an increasingly insurrectionary cast, identifying themselves more and more as the "mothers of the revolution"'.<sup>10</sup> In 1985, the ANC's Women's



Section called on women to ‘take up arms against the enemy’,<sup>11</sup> while the image of the militarized woman simultaneously entered ANC visual culture. In 1980, the cover of *The Voice of Women* (the primary journal for the ANC’s Women’s Section) depicted two women, infants tied to their backs, brandishing AK-47s and bayonets.<sup>12</sup> Women who joined the ANC’s military wing, Umkhonto we Sizwe (MK), also used motherhood to justify their militancy; as one female cadre stated, ‘I’m a guerilla *because* I’m a mother’.<sup>13</sup> By the 1980s, politicised women in South Africa ‘everywhere enlarged their militancy, insisting not only on their right to political agency, but also on their right of access to the technologies of violence’.<sup>14</sup> Previous scholarship on women in Natal shows that some mothers encouraged their children’s involvement in political violence, even ‘carrying stones in their pinafores to give to the youth’.<sup>15</sup>

This existing literature makes surprisingly little reference to Winnie Mandela, who is arguably South Africa’s most infamous militant mother. Nevertheless, it demonstrates that the environment into which she returned from banishment in 1985 was already steeped in the discourse of maternal militancy. Following her return to Soweto, Winnie Mandela quickly became an emblematic figure of the struggle to

many township residents. Her speeches at funerals and political rallies were particularly well regarded for their rousing calls for township residents to take up militant action against the state. In 1985 she declared,

I will speak to you of violence...I will tell you why we are violent. It is because those who oppress us are violent. The Afrikaner knows only one language: the language of violence. The white man will not hand over power in talks around a table...Therefore, all that is left to us is this painful process of violence.<sup>16</sup>

As her prominence grew, Winnie Mandela began to make more direct militant demands on her audiences. In 1986 she stated, 'We no longer come to the funerals of our young heroes to shed tears. The time for crying is over... The time has come where we must show that we are disciplined and trained warriors'.<sup>17</sup> A month later she declared, 'The time will come when I will call upon you to defend yourselves,

and in a disciplined manner. I want to call on you to close ranks and prepare for a final onslaught from our side'.<sup>18</sup>

Winnie Mandela's speeches during these years were rendered distinct from those of her male contemporaries by her identity as a woman and a mother, and her frequent references to the suffering of children and the duty of mothers not only to protect, but also to avenge the suffering of their families. At a funeral in Mamelodi in December 1985, she stated, 'In the same way as you have had to bury our children today, so shall the blood of our fallen heroes be avenged!'<sup>19</sup> Calling upon similar themes, she declared in a radio interview two months earlier, 'We, today, find ourselves collecting bodies of our loved ones, our children...we find ourselves virtually collecting their corpses everyday'.<sup>20</sup>

Black youths – and particularly the most militant and politicised among them – are seen as Winnie Mandela's primary constituency during the mid-1980s.<sup>21</sup> Yet she also made militant demands clearly directed at women, who she sought to mobilise by appealing to their maternal responsibilities. In 1988, on behalf of the 'mothers of Soweto', she held a protest against the continued imprisonment of

struggle leaders. She stated that children had done their part in the fight for liberation, and that it was now time for mothers to take up that fight, and become partners in the struggle.<sup>22</sup> Here, Winnie Mandela was not encouraging women to participate as conventional, conservative mothers, but as militant mothers, calling on them to expand traditional notions of women's roles to justify increased public militancy. At a speech in 1987 she told women, 'Your children are being killed and maimed daily. The time for rhetoric has passed'.<sup>23</sup>

Furthermore, when addressing the public she carefully cultivated her identity as a national mother figure by referring to herself as a mother and the crowds as her children. At a funeral in 1985 she told those gathered, 'I have come to weep with you, my children...I have come to wipe up the blood of your sons and daughters with you'.<sup>24</sup> This public focus on motherhood was not new for Winnie, who played an important role in the Black Parents Association in 1976, established a crèche and children's clinic while in Brandfort, and provided shelter to politicised youths following her return to Soweto. Sheila Meintjes argues that by constructing herself as a national mother figure, Winnie Mandela was able to gain moral and political power.<sup>25</sup> The success of her self-styled identity is reflected in the discourse used by

others to talk about her, for few media reports mention her name without referring to her as the ‘mother of the nation’ or ‘MamaWetu’.

Other female leaders in South Africa at the time were using a similar maternal rhetoric.. In a 1989 interview, Albertina Sisulu stated, ‘a woman is a mother, and women are the people who are suffering most. If the government continues killing children, the women will become even more angry, and these are the people who will take up our struggle’.<sup>26</sup> However, Winnie employed the discourse of militant motherhood in ways that distinguished her from her female contemporaries. She was more extreme and more public than other female activists at the time, and she also asserted a more forceful image of womanhood that challenged male prejudices against politicised women. Additionally, she not only spoke about violence but physically embodied militancy in her day-to-day actions of defiance, taking on the apartheid state in ways largely unprecedented for a woman.

### **A New Political Womanhood**

When male-dominated political organisations adopt the discourse of militant motherhood to encourage women’s participation, they often do so within the

confines of patriarchy and rarely challenge gender norms.<sup>27</sup> As Cynthia Enloe argues, 'Frequently, [men] have urged women to take active roles in nationalist movements, but confined them to the roles of ego-stroking girlfriend, stoic wife or nurturing mother'.<sup>28</sup> In South Africa, many men resented their wives' or daughters' political activism, as it distracted them from household work and required leaving home after dark.<sup>29</sup> Male members of struggle organisations described females as unsuited to political work due to their physical weakness, weak temperament, and propensity for gossip.<sup>30</sup> These arguments are echoed in the recollections of several oral history interviewees. A female ANC activist in the 1980s, remembers, 'If you were married you were the same as the child, because the man made his law on you. Women were meant to sit in the house, cook, clean, do everything'.<sup>31</sup> In addition, politics was seen as a predominantly male domain. Another female Soweto resident who joined the Federation of Transvaal Women (FETRAW) in 1985, stated,

They told us, you are a woman, you are meant to get married. Why do you bother yourself with that political stuff? That's meant for men...

Because you were a woman you had to be at home; your role was to get married and have a family. Maybe if you were a man it wouldn't have been so difficult.<sup>32</sup>

The consequence of such perceptions was that most women were not able to participate in politics on an equal basis with men, and where they attempted to do so they were often met with patronising attitudes and intolerance.<sup>33</sup> Although women's presence in civic organisations increased in the 1980s, their primary role was still 'to give succour to the fraught and injured, to see that there is food in the house and to provide kitchen and bedroom services'.<sup>34</sup>

At a time when women's political involvement was constrained by a number of obstacles, Winnie Mandela appeared as a symbol of defiance against traditional gender norms. She was neither meek nor submissive, and refused to be controlled by any male activist involved in the struggle – even her own husband.<sup>35</sup> While she was neither a feminist nor specifically advocated women's emancipation, her actions and rhetoric promoted a more assertive role for women in the struggle. A

female ANC activist described her as an inspirational figure and recalled, ‘Winnie Mandela played a big role, because if it was not for Winnie, plenty of women would not have freedom. Winnie was a big fighter for women...We looked up to her militancy’.<sup>36</sup> Similarly, a female former student activist recounted,

In the society that we grew up in, men were the leaders...they were the head of families, they were supposed to protect women. Now women also stood up and said ‘we have a role to play in the liberation of our society, we have a role to play in the liberation of our men, ourselves and our children’.<sup>37</sup>

While describing that she looked up to all the ‘big mammas’ in the struggle including Albertina Sisulu and others, a female member of the Congress of South African Students (COSAS) stated that Winnie was ‘different than the others...she was so strong’.<sup>38</sup> She later recounted that seeing Winnie, and even Winnie’s daughter Zindzi Mandela, play such powerful political roles made her realise that



she too could contravene gender stereotypes and play an equivalent part.<sup>39</sup> The immense affect Winnie had on many women in the 1980s is reflected by the extreme loyalty of female informants towards her. For, in contrast to male interviewees, the vast majority of women interviewed refused to speak negatively of her, and repeatedly stated that she was a revered and respected leader, and continues to be so to this day.

While demonstrating a more assertive role for women, Winnie Mandela nevertheless refused to relinquish her femininity. In Sierra Leone, female combatants were assumed to have to ‘become like men’ in order to participate in political violence.<sup>40</sup> Winnie however maintained a distinctly feminine image. She was repeatedly described in media reports as beautiful, a ‘charismatic presence who exudes sensuality and sexuality’.<sup>41</sup> Yet she simultaneously exuded militancy. She was known for wearing military attire – khaki jumpsuits, camouflage patterns and berets – often adorned with jewellery in ANC colours. She used her clothing as an outlet of defiance, frequently wearing traditional African garments or party colours to public events, even though she was banned from doing so. While thus not

conforming to traditional ideals of feminine beauty such as passivity and weakness, she nevertheless remained an object of admiration and desire.<sup>42</sup>

In understanding how Winnie Mandela was able to defy gender norms in a society long dominated by men, one must acknowledge her unique position in South Africa at the time. Her status as a woman was exceptional because of her private role as Nelson Mandela's wife.<sup>43</sup> This role also played an important public function, as Winnie was seen as an important link between Robben Island and the outside world.<sup>44</sup> This link and status as a loyal wife authorised her outspokenness in the public sphere, and provided her with a ready-made audience as Nelson's assumed mouthpiece and 'stand-in' during his jail sentence. Yet, Nelson Mandela's prolonged absence also enabled Winnie to act with the impunity of a woman not immediately confined by the patriarchal constraints of a marital relationship. She herself acknowledges her unique position, stating, 'I think I am the most unmarried married woman'.<sup>45</sup> In media reports and her own rhetoric prior to Nelson Mandela's release in 1990, she is branded first as a mother, then as a political leader and woman, but rarely as a wife. She therefore seemed to circumvent a common tension female public figures feel between motherhood, political activism and wifehood

after her initial return from Brandfort. However, following her involvement in unsanctioned violence, her public image was seen as inextricably linked to Mandela's, as she was demonized as an imperfect and devious wife and political activist.

The recollections of several informants demonstrate that, in addition to promoting more assertive roles for women, Winnie Mandela also physically embodied the image of the militant mother in ways that her female contemporaries did not. She was arguably more militant than many male ANC leaders, and was subsequently more in-step with those most directly involved in on-the-ground resistance to apartheid: the youth. In Soweto, she was rumoured to have vital connections with the ANC's military wing, MK. A number of informants spoke about her as a recruiter of MK cadres, and her house as a gathering point for those wishing to go into exile. In one interview she herself stated, 'I personally commanded thousands of youth in this country underground'.<sup>46</sup> She is also remembered as a key arms supplier to MK and Self-Defence Units within the townships. A male leader of COSAS in Soweto, remembers,

Winnie supplied arms to the MK boys. There was a time of mistrust, when the government had infiltrated arms supplies and was tampering with them. People would get guns that misfired, and ended up hurting the person using it. But people always knew that Winnie's supply had not been tampered with. Her supply was good.<sup>47</sup>

Another former youth activist specifically stated that Winnie Mandela supplied him with firearms in the mid 1980s.<sup>48</sup> While new research suggests that Winnie was a central figure in the ANC underground in Soweto in the 1960s, and in Brandfort during her banishment, her exact role within underground structures in the 1980s remains unclear.<sup>49</sup> However, in order to understand her public prominence, facts are of less relevance than rumours and beliefs circulating at the time.

Winnie Mandela was also admired by the youth for her militancy, not just in her speeches but also in her day-to-day actions. From 1986 onwards, she was often

seen with a group of young men, known as the Mandela United Football Club (MUFC), who are discussed in further detail below. What is important to note here, however, is the way in which Winnie and MUFC changed the nature of violence in Soweto. One male interviewee reported that previously, those involved in the struggle operated in extreme secrecy and with discretion, generally planning sabotage or confrontational activities at night. Yet ‘Winnie’s boys’ operated in broad daylight, in plain view of township residents and the security police. He stated,

The presence of Winnie, and the fact that she declared open warfare, was a positive addition to that period... She closed a very important void and made that zone of Soweto more liberated in an open way, and the police were dead scared of her because it was open warfare.<sup>50</sup>

A Pan African Congress (PAC) youth activist in Soweto at the time spoke of similar admiration, despite the fact that Winnie Mandela belonged to a rival political organisation:

She appealed to youth because she was militant. Apart from the aura of the name Mandela she was militant in her own right. She could stand up publicly to the police. She was not the conventional mother who was just protecting young people, she was a fighter, and she projected herself that way.<sup>51</sup>

Jeremy Seekings argues that increasing political violence in the 1980s ‘demobilised’ women from political participation.<sup>52</sup> Yet heightened violence did not make Winnie Mandela shy away. Rather, of all political leaders at the time she was one of the most open advocates of using violence against the state. Her militancy and public prominence was exceptional for a black South African woman at this time, even given the rich history of women’s participation in the anti-apartheid

struggle. Naturally, much of her initial popularity was due to her position as Nelson Mandela's wife. Yet by working *within* traditional ideology that identifies women with motherhood, she managed to transform and expand conventional notions of motherhood in ways that allowed her to take on the apartheid state in ways largely unprecedented for a woman.

### **'Mugger of the Nation'?**

However, Winnie Mandela's successful expansion of traditional notions of motherhood, and her subsequent popularity as a mythologised mother figure and struggle leader, began to falter when, from 1986 to 1989, she was embroiled in a number of public controversies concerning her encouragement of or suspected involvement in extreme and unauthorised violence that challenged both cultural expectations of feminine behaviour and the ANC's authority. Two incidents in particular continue to stand out in historical memory.

First, in April 1986, Winnie Mandela made her most open advocacy of violence to date while addressing a crowd gathered at a funeral. In what was perceived by many whites as a threat to their children, she stated, 'We work in the

white man's kitchen, we bring up the white man's children. We could have killed them any time we wanted to!' <sup>53</sup> Next, she seemed to publicly endorse 'necklacing' – a form of execution that was sometimes used against suspected informers in South African townships at this time – in which a tire was placed around the victim's neck, filled with petrol and set alight. In direct reference to necklacing, Winnie Mandela stated, 'We have no guns – we have only stones, boxes of matches and petrol... Together, hand in hand, with our boxes of matches and our necklaces we shall liberate this country'! <sup>54</sup>

Between January 1984 and June 1987, 672 people in South Africa were burnt to death in political violence, of which almost half were necklaced. <sup>55</sup> Necklacing earned particular criticism from activist groups, as it was a form of punishment used almost exclusively against black people. While a number of political activists publicly condemned the necklace, the official position taken by the ANC following Winnie Mandela's speech was ambiguous. At a press conference, ANC president Oliver Tambo criticised necklacing, yet stated that the ANC would not condemn people who were driven to such extreme methods by the apartheid government. <sup>56</sup> According to many observers, Winnie Mandela was one of such people, 'a tragic



product of the apartheid state' who having suffered violence herself supported its infliction on others.<sup>57</sup>

The second incident began after Winnie Mandela offered shelter in her Soweto home to a group of young men seeking refuge from police persecution. In 1986, these youths formed the Mandela United Football Club (MUFC) at Winnie's suggestion, which she insisted she created 'to take youngsters out of the streets and away from certain death in confrontations with members of security forces'.<sup>58</sup> Yet by the time the team was first mentioned in the press in January 1987, its activities had clearly expanded beyond mere sporting rivalries. Throughout 1987, police questioned Winnie Mandela in regards to the team's activities, and rumours circulated throughout Soweto of the club's involvement in gang violence.<sup>59</sup> As news of various beatings and disappearances made press headlines, so too did rumours that Winnie was not only aware of the gang's activities, but also directly involved in them. The most infamous incident involving MUFC occurred in December 1988, when members of the team forcibly removed four young men, including fourteen-year-old activist Stompie Moeketsi, from the manse of Methodist Minister Paul Verryn after reports of homosexual misconduct. The youths were taken to the back

rooms of Winnie Mandela the back rooms of Winnie Mandela youth center 1988, when member Stompie disappeared, and was not seen again until his body was identified at the morgue in January. During the 1990 trial of MUFC's 'coach' Jerry Richardson for Stompie's murder, several witnesses testified that Winnie Mandela had not only ordered the youths' assault and had instructed Richardson to dispose of Stompie. As the judge summarised, 'Winnie punched and slapped each of them and called for a *sjambok* to be brought to her. Each of the four was beaten by Mrs. Mandela' M<sup>60</sup> While she denied all accusations of her involvement or even knowledge of football club activities, she was brought to trial in 1991 and convicted of kidnapping and as an accessory to assault – a conviction that she appealed successfully in 1993.<sup>61</sup>

These two incidents, exacerbated by a number of other events involving her fiery rhetoric and the actions of MUFC, served to transform Winnie Mandela from the 'mother of the nation' to the 'mugger of the nation' in press headlines and in the minds of many South Africans. Within perceptions of her newly defined relationship with violence, one can find two predominant trends: people either criticised her as a failed militant who had stepped too far beyond the struggle's demarcated bounds

of organised, disciplined action; or as a failed mother, woman, and wife who had transgressed the limits of acceptable female behaviour.

Demarcating the line between ‘legitimate’ and ‘illegitimate’ violence had long been a central facet of South Africa’s liberation struggle. The ANC’s decision to adopt armed struggle was deeply controversial, as it was not entirely clear that non-violent means had been completely exhausted.<sup>62</sup> Nelson Mandela asserted that ‘it is the oppressor who defines the nature of the struggle, and the oppressed is often left no recourse but to use methods that mirror those of the oppressor’.<sup>63</sup> Nevertheless, he and his colleagues constantly fought to distinguish sanctioned, political uses of violence that targeted symbols of oppression, from unsanctioned, unplanned, and personal uses that targeted civilians. Winnie Mandela’s early speeches during this period were in line with ANC policy towards militarism and the goal of making townships ‘ungovernable’. Yet, by mid 1986 she was falling increasingly out of step the ANC’s ethical stance on violence, as her words and actions came to personify the very dangers of uncontrolled violence that the ANC feared. Furthermore, her rhetoric and actions shifted from encouraging violence

against the apartheid state to deviants within the black community. As Munro argues, Winnie's transgressions

Epitomized important issues for the nation then in the throes of being born. Who had the right to use violence, what kind of rule of law would be built on the ruins of apartheid, and how would the psychic and social effects of histories of violence be managed?<sup>64</sup>

Winnie's actions, wrote Anthony Sampson 'now appeared to be taking ungovernability to its extremes...which gave a nightmare picture of an alternative South Africa'.<sup>65</sup> Winnie Mandela's 'necklacing' speech and involvement with MUFC came at 'the precise moment when the ANC was moderating its international image from 'terrorist organisation' to government-in-waiting'.<sup>66</sup> The *Sunday Times* reported that her actions had tarnished her reputation, transforming her 'from a shining symbol of her nation's dignity to an embarrassment for the black liberation cause'.<sup>67</sup> Her rhetoric and actions 'brought the movement to disrepute', and were

repeatedly used by the state's allies to prove the malicious objectives and violent nature of the ANC.<sup>68</sup> As one newspaper responded, 'What naked hate! What venomous incitement to violence! What damning evidence of ANC intentions!'<sup>69</sup>

The liberation movement's disapproval of Winnie Mandela's actions was made public in February 1989, when the Mass Democratic Movement (MDM)<sup>70</sup> held a meeting to discuss the consequences of her suspected involvement in Stompie's death, and ultimately issued an official statement distancing themselves from her:

We are in the view that Mrs Mandela has abused the trust and confidence which she has enjoyed over the years. She has not been a member of any of the democratic structures of the UDF and COSATU, and she has often acted without consulting the democratic movement. Often, her practices have violated the spirit and ethos of the democratic movement... We are not prepared to remain silent where those who are violating human rights claim to be doing so in the name of the struggle against apartheid.

The Mass Democratic Movement hereby distances itself from Mrs Mandela and her actions. We call upon our people, in particular, the Soweto community, to exercise this distancing in a dignified manner.<sup>71</sup>

In her suspected involvement in illegitimate violence, Winnie Mandela had disregarded many of the ideals of the struggle: she undermined unity, acted without consulting organisational leadership, and threatened to destabilize the ANC's improved reputation. MDM leaders Murphy Morobe and Azhar Cachalia stated that their decision to ostracise Winnie Mandela was motivated by their 'moral repugnance' for the club's conduct, and the concern that these activities were a distraction from 'our urgent and primary task of fighting the regime'.<sup>72</sup>

The MDM's statement is carefully constructed in making no reference to Winnie Mandela's gender. In contrast, the ANC ultimately made a patriarchal decision to reintegrate her into its fold, as she stood triumphant by her husband's side upon his release from prison just one year later. While no such decision has ever been declared publicly, one can speculate that the ANC's choice to rehabilitate

Winnie was in deference to the wishes of the organisation's patriarch, Nelson Mandela. During a period of intense debate surrounding Winnie Mandela's fate in early 1989, leaders of the ANC expressed reservations about her future within the organisation. Then president Oliver Tambo proclaimed, 'What must I do? We can't control her. The ANC can't control her'.<sup>73</sup> In his diary, he remarked,

Image in tatter w top level

Mandela should act to save himself and ANC.<sup>74</sup>

Yet Nelson Mandela did the opposite: he came to Winnie's aid, and not only repeatedly denied her guilt but later supported her political ambitions within the ANC, despite widespread resistance and letters of complaint from over one hundred ANC branches.<sup>75</sup> Mandela's decision illuminates the patriarchal nature of the ANC and the struggle more broadly, for he did not save Winnie as an activist in her own right, but as his wife. The irony here lies in the juxtaposition between the powerful

image of the militant mother that Winnie Mandela constructed, and the image of a patriarch's wife in need of rescuing that ultimately saved her.

Another interpretation might be that Winnie Mandela, despite her transgressions, remained an influential public figure – but one that was best kept contained within the ANC fold. While ANC leaders were concerned with Winnie's increasing penchant for violence, they were nevertheless aware of her political appeal, especially her relationship with youth and the unemployed, and her 'populist flair' that Nelson Mandela lacked. While Tambo was 'appalled' by Winnie Mandela's behaviour, he still hoped that she would be reintegrated into the movement. Both Winnie and her militant supporters could be better controlled and harnessed from inside the ANC tent.<sup>76</sup>

The recollections of several male informants suggest that Winnie Mandela was perceived as an uncontrollable woman who needed tighter patriarchal constraints. Using language that mirrored the MDM's statement, a male COSAS member stated that following the Stompie affair, 'We tried to bring [Winnie] into our fold and make her more disciplined, but it was difficult. If



she didn't participate in the organisations it was difficult, difficult to get her to follow any kind of discipline'.<sup>77</sup> Another COSAS member recounted, 'She was an out of order woman...She was out of control. She wanted a lot of publicity; she wanted to be stronger than any other woman in the country. She was a problem'.<sup>78</sup> Similarly, a male COSAS leader in Soweto, stated, 'She was uncomfortable with the status quo. She was too powerful for a woman'.<sup>79</sup>

These responses warrant a feminist reading of societal perceptions of female militarism and violence. As Elshtain writes in *Women and War*, violent women are often described as 'uncontrollable', as they are a 'lustful, disordered and unstable sex' who have the capability to 'loose mindless destruction and violence on the world [around them]'.<sup>80</sup> While male violence is moralised under 'just war theory' as ordered and structured, female violence 'is what happens when politics breaks down into riots, revolutions, or anarchy: when things are out of control'.<sup>81</sup> The responses of male interviewees also support Munro's argument that Winnie's fall from grace may have exacerbated the patriarchal nature of struggle politics in South Africa. She writes, 'The lesson all too easily appeared to be that women cannot handle power and that a woman without a husband to guide and contain her would

go wrong'.<sup>82</sup> Nevertheless, the majority of men interviewed agreed that although Winnie Mandela ultimately crossed a line between acceptable and unacceptable behaviour, her influence during the concluding years of the anti-apartheid struggle should not be underestimated.

In contrast to male informants, the majority of women interviewed did not express concern with Winnie Mandela's transgression of disciplined militancy. One even proclaimed her reverence for Winnie's necklacing speech.<sup>83</sup> Yet when asked about the activities of MUFC, most were evasive, vague or simply refused to comment. Their denial reflects the salience and importance of Winnie Mandela's construction of militant motherhood, and the innovative notion of political womanhood she espoused. For these young, politicised women, Winnie Mandela's previous identity was too strong to be threatened by her suspected involvement in violence, and she remains to this day their 'mother of the nation'.

### **'Lady Macdela'**

Where Winnie Mandela earned the most heated criticism was from the press (and particularly white, conservative papers), who repeatedly denounced her as a

‘monster’ who had abandoned the prescribed norms of womanhood, motherhood, and wifehood. She was described as ‘openly bloody minded’,<sup>84</sup> ‘an unscrupulous extremist with a chilling lack of respect for life’,<sup>85</sup> an ‘evil woman who loves violence for the sake of violence’,<sup>86</sup> and ‘a folk-heroine who turned to connive in indiscriminate violence and senseless mayhem’.<sup>87</sup> One newspaper headline proclaimed, ‘The ‘Mother of the Nation’ gives Birth to a Monster’.<sup>88</sup> When violent women are demonised in the media, they are often portrayed through similar, repeated tropes: as ‘mothers’ who commit violence in order to protect their children or avenge the deaths of loved ones; ‘monsters’, who are ‘mad’ or pathologically damaged; or as ‘whores’ whose violence is the result of their sexual dependence or depravity.<sup>89</sup> These tropes are so embedded in discussions of female violence that they were even used by Winnie Mandela’s close friends to defend her. Helen Suzman, speaking about how the apartheid state affected Winnie, stated, ‘They turned her from a warmhearted person into a mad creature’.<sup>90</sup> Here, Suzman initially casts Winnie Mandela as an ideal female figure – as warmhearted – whose use of violence renders her not only ‘mad’ but also a ‘creature’ void of humanity.

Similarly, Sampson writes of how she was increasingly referred to as *Indlovukazi*, or ‘she-elephant’, in the early 1990s.<sup>91</sup>

A particularly illuminating comparison made by the media was between Winnie Mandela and Lady Macbeth<sup>92</sup> – a character who suppressed her natural maternal instincts, asking to be ‘unsex[ed]’ and have her breasts dried of milk, so that she could become ambitious, ruthless and violent.<sup>93</sup> In the pictured cartoon (Figure 1), South African cartoonist Zapiro references Lady Macbeth’s famous quote ‘out, damned spot!’ in regards to the blood on her hands from her suspected involvement in Stompie’s death. Such characterisations speak to the limitations of a woman’s use of violence; for ‘while the use of forms of violence is naturalised within the dynamics of masculine political activism, the gendered language and symbolism of sexual difference makes women’s relationship to violence more visible and culturally problematic’.<sup>94</sup> As Tapiwa Zimudzi states, African women are ‘expected to convey the qualities of gentleness, quietness, modesty and good motherhood’.<sup>95</sup> When women do not conform to these expectations, and instead ‘transgress supposed gender stereotypes and social hierarchies in their use of lethal violence’, they are demonized and declared ‘unnatural and not “womanly”’.<sup>96</sup>

Winnie Mandela's actions were also portrayed as those of a deviant or disrespectful wife. While Nelson Mandela's absence provided her with a degree of autonomy from immediate patriarchal controls, she continued to be defined by her marriage throughout this period. She was Nelson's 'political widow' who was expected to carry his torch in his absence.<sup>97</sup> While this greatly contributed to her popularity, it also hastened her fall from grace as she was 'demonized as the imperfect mother and wife of a couple represented as 'parenting' an emergent nation'.<sup>98</sup> She was described as Mandela's 'evil burden'<sup>99</sup> and a 'shrieking shrew of a wife' who made her husband look like a 'doting' and 'lovesick' fool.<sup>100</sup> Her actions reflected badly upon Mandela, who was described as being 'blinded like Samson by love, seduced like Macbeth into betraying his better nature'.<sup>101</sup>

Furthermore, her actions were condemned as those of a deviant or 'bad' mother. While mothers are expected to create, value and protect life, Winnie Mandela seemed to have adopted 'chilling lack of respect for [it]'.<sup>102</sup> As a journalist commented in response to her necklacing speech,

Mrs. Mandela has a disturbing history of making emotional and violent demands on the people, thereby undermining her position as ‘mother of the nation’. No mother would urge her children to face certain destruction in the face of a strong and resolute enemy.<sup>103</sup>

Another journalist investigating Stompie’s murder asked, ‘what greater irony can there be for a woman who not long ago was endearingly referred to as the ‘Mother of the Nation’ to now find herself facing trial for assault leading to the murder of a child?’<sup>104</sup> Prominent headlines questioned her competence as a mother, asking, ‘Mother of the Nation?’<sup>105</sup> and ‘Winnie Mandela: The Mother of the Nation or a murderous bully?’<sup>106</sup> Similarly, Nicodemus Sono, the father of Lolo Sono – a youth last seen in Winnie Mandela’s company before he disappeared in 1988 – stated, ‘She *used* to be a mother, she *used* to be a loving person’.<sup>107</sup> Because Winnie Mandela had seemingly abandoned the ideals of ‘good’ motherhood, she was now deemed unfit for her role as a national mother figure.

In response to the various accusations levelled against her, Winnie Mandela continued to place emphasis on her maternal responsibilities. Yet, in defence or denial of her actions she no longer presented herself as a militant mother, but reverted to a much more traditional and pacific notion of motherhood, constructing herself as a woman who was predisposed to peaceful and caring behaviour. This strategy demonstrates the malleability of motherhood as a trope of female identity. Stacey Hynd argues that women on trial are ‘active agents capable of using courtroom demeanour together with specific explanations and rationalizations of their violence as legally-aware strategies to gain leniency’.<sup>108</sup> During her trial, Winnie Mandela adopted a peaceful demeanour and implied an inherent incompatibility between her reputation as the ‘mother of the nation’ and a monstrous perpetrator of violence, stating, ‘That it could even be dreamt that I would be responsible for the murder of a child when I have spent all my life fighting against these injustices appals me’.<sup>109</sup> Her lawyer, George Bizos, adopted a similar strategy. He began his examination by clearly constructing Winnie Mandela as a mother figure, focusing his questions on her role as a social worker, her establishment of a crèche and children’s clinic in Brandfort, and her provision of housing for

politicised youth in Soweto.<sup>110</sup> He then argued that the crimes she was accused of were contradictory to her maternal nature. As the press reported: ‘Associating herself with the abduction and assault of four youths would have been contrary to the previous conduct of Mrs Winnie Mandela of protecting youths from sexual abuse and also to her character’.<sup>111</sup> Winnie also stressed her duty as a protective mother figure by highlighting her good intentions in forming MUFC, asserting, ‘I gave [the boys] shelter, as it was my duty as a social worker’.<sup>112</sup> Following Stompie’s disappearance, she insisted, ‘As a mother, my first concern is the safety of the missing child,’<sup>113</sup> and later contended, ‘I was convicted because I took youths under my wing. I was saving them’.<sup>114</sup>

Furthermore, Winnie Mandela adopted the image of a modest and reserved woman while on trial. Media descriptions of her appearance in the courtroom are a far cry from those of her at funerals or political rallies. While known for wearing camouflaged khakis and ANC colours, on the stand she was ‘immaculately dressed in a cream suit’.<sup>115</sup> No longer was she defiant and headstrong, but ‘soft’ and ‘controlled’.<sup>116</sup> As one journalist commented, the very characteristics that made her



a hero during apartheid – her courage and defiance – would have acted against her in court.<sup>117</sup>

Similarly, in order to be politically reinstated into the ANC following the media outcry over Stompie's death she needed to adopt a more traditional feminine image. At Nelson Mandela's release from prison in 1990, she was described as having 'adapted to the role of demure wife without so much as a backwards glance'.<sup>118</sup> Press reports demonstrate that she experienced a resurgence of sorts around the time of Nelson's release, with papers claiming, 'Mother of the Nation regains her appeal,' and 'The old cries of 'viva Mother of the Nation viva' are ringing out again'.<sup>119</sup> However, as 'mother of the nation' she was encouraged to 'return to her rightful place as wife and mother,' now that she was no longer needed to act in Mandela's place.<sup>120</sup>

## **Conclusion**

This article, in examining discourses used by Winnie Mandela and those describing her, has illuminated the malleable nature of motherhood as a public identity, but also its restrictions and confines. As Winnie Mandela and those before

her have shown, the concept of motherhood can be expanded in times of conflict to achieve a variety of aims, from arguing for peace to justifying women's unconventional acts of militancy. Winnie Mandela adopted the discourse of militant motherhood and reshaped it to perform in new ways, taking on both the apartheid state and the patriarchal nature of the struggle in unparalleled ways for a woman. As she stretched notions of traditional motherhood and virtuous wifedom beyond their limits, she shifted gender politics and not only redefined her relationship with men but provided an opportunity for other politicised women to do the same. Interviews with female activists demonstrate the power of her contravention of prescribed female norms, and support Munro's argument that her 'refusal to be an obedient black female subject' in some way released women from the patriarchal confines of the struggle, and in doing so retained them as Winnie Mandela's strongest supporters to this day.<sup>121</sup>

Yet as Winnie Mandela was implicated in a number of violent abuses, she increasingly lost control of this novel construction. Breaking the boundaries of maternal militancy, she began to advocate and participate in a form of violence that was unacceptable to struggle norms of both militancy and motherhood. While

similar actions to Winnie's would have earned equal disapproval had they been committed by a man, many of the ways in which she was condemned were distinctly shaped by the gendered discourses of female violence. This illuminates the salience of societal perceptions of female violence, and also the limits of the discourse of maternal militancy. For militant motherhood, in Winnie Mandela's case, could not be extended to defend herself against charges of violent excess, particularly violence inflicted against black children. She was therefore forced to abandon her discourse of militancy in favour of a much more traditional and peaceful notion of motherhood while on the witness stand. As she stretched the malleability of motherhood to its breaking point, her status as both a symbol of militancy and a metaphorical mother came under attack, as she was transformed by public discourse from the 'mother of the nation' to an undisciplined activist and deviant mother and wife resembling Lady Macbeth.

In the 25 years since Nelson Mandela's release, Winnie Mandela has continued to be one of South Africa's most divisive public figures. Her constant struggle to strike a balance between her public and private life, her image as a militant and her image as a mother, and those who adore her and those who despise

her, reflects the symbolic overload public female figures such as Winnie are forced to bear when negotiating between the conflicting and often contradictory identities of mother, wife, and militant political leader.

---

I am grateful to Gary Kynoch, Stacey Hynd, and Jonny Steinberg (who supervised this project in its original dissertation form) for providing generous feedback on this article as well as to the anonymous reviewers at *Gender & History*.

<sup>1</sup> Mark Whitaker and Richard Manning, *Newsweek*, 16 December 1985.

<sup>2</sup> Now Winnie Madikizela-Mandela, she is referred to throughout as Winnie Mandela as this was her name during the period under discussion.

<sup>3</sup> Jacklyn Cock, “‘Another Mother for Peace’: Women and Peace Building in South Africa, 1983-2003’ in N. Gasa (eds) *Women in South African History* (Cape Town: Human Sciences Research Council, 2007), pp. 257-280, here p. 267. Also see Nancy Scheper-Hughes, ‘Maternal Thinking and the Politics of War,’ *Peace Review* 8 (1996): pp. 353-358.

<sup>4</sup> *The Daily Telegraph*, 14 May 1991.

<sup>5</sup> For Winnie’s appearance before the TRC see Antjie Krog, *Country of My Skull* (New York: Three Rivers Press, 1998); and Alex Boraine, *A Country Unmasked: Inside South Africa’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission* (Oxford: Oxford

---

University Press, 2000). For her political ambitions within the ANC Women's League see Shireen Hassim, *Women's Organizations and Democracy in South Africa* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2006). Also see various biographies, including Anne Marie du Preez Bebdrob, *Winnie Mandela: a Life* (Cape Town: Zebra Press, 2003); and Emma Gilbey, *The Lady: The Life and Times of Winnie Mandela* (London: Vintage, 1994).

<sup>6</sup> For more on oral history theory see Michael Frisch, *A Shared Authority: Essays on the Craft and Meaning of Oral and Public History* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990); Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson, (eds) *The Oral History Reader* (London and New York: Routledge, 1998); Alessandro Portelli, *The Text and the Voice* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994); and Raphael Samuel and Paul Thompson, *The Myths we Live By* (London: Routledge, 1990).

<sup>7</sup> After initially locating a few interviewees, a snowballing technique was used in which each interviewee was asked to provide contact details for other potential informants. Out of a total of thirty-two interviews that form part of a broader research project, fifteen discussed or mentioned Winnie Mandela. Due to the

---

controversial nature of some of the subjects discussed by interviewees, all of those cited directly have been made anonymous, and are referred to only by their gender and political affiliation.

<sup>8</sup> Anne McClintock, ‘“No Longer in a Future Heaven”: Gender, Race, and Nationalism,’ *Cultural Politics* 11 (1997): pp. 89-112, here p. 116. See Cherryl Walker, *Women and Resistance in South Africa* (London : Onyx Press, 1982); Julia Wells, ‘The Rise and Fall of Motherism as a Force in Black Women’s Resistance Movements,’ Conference on Women and Gender in Southern Africa, University of Natal, Durban, 1991; Shireen Hassim, ‘Family, Motherhood and Zulu Nationalism: The Politics of the Inkatha Women’s Brigade,’ *Feminist Review* (1993): pp. 1-25.

<sup>9</sup> Walker, *Women and Resistance in South Africa*, p. 219.

<sup>10</sup> McClintock, ‘No Longer,’ p. 116.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 117.

<sup>12</sup> Kim Miller, ‘Moms with Guns: Women’s Political Agency in Anti-Apartheid Visual Culture,’ *African Arts* 42:2 (2009): pp. 68-75, here p. 73.

---

<sup>13</sup> Jacklyn Cock, *Women and War in South Africa* (London: Open Letters, 1992), p. 152.

<sup>14</sup> McClintock, 'No Longer,' p. 117.

<sup>15</sup> Jo Beall et al., 'African Women in the Durban Struggle, 1985-1986: Towards a Transformation of Roles?' in G. Moss and I. Obery (eds) *South African Review 4* (Johannesburg: Raven Press, 1987), pp. 93-103, here p. 101.

<sup>16</sup> Rachel Holmes, 'All Too Familiar: Gender, Violence, and National Politics in the Fall of Winnie Mandela,' in A. Myers and S. Wright (eds) *No Angels: Women who Commit Violence* (London: Pandora, 1996), pp. 85-100, here p. 95.

<sup>17</sup> *The Sunday Star*, 6 April 1986.

<sup>18</sup> *The Star*, 2 May 1986.

<sup>19</sup> Whitaker and Manning, *Newsweek*.

<sup>20</sup> Historical Papers, The University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, A2094 EC1, United Nations Radio, 'A Conversation with Nomazo Winnie Mandela,' 8 October 1985.

<sup>21</sup> du Preez Bebdrob, *Winnie Mandela*, Gilbey, *The Lady*.



---

<sup>22</sup> *Business Day*, 25 March 1988.

<sup>23</sup> *Pretoria News*, 11 August 1987.

<sup>24</sup> Whitaker and Manning, *Newsweek*.

<sup>25</sup> Sheila Meintjes, 'Winnie Madikizela Mandela: Tragic Figure? Populist Tribune? Township Tough?' *South African Report* 13 (1998).

<sup>26</sup> Diane E. H. Russell, *Lives of Courage: Women for a New South Africa* (Lincoln: iUniverse, 1989), p. 151.

<sup>27</sup> Cherryl Walker, 'Conceptualising Motherhood in Twentieth Century South Africa,' *Journal of Southern African Studies* 21 (1995): pp. 417-437, here p. 421.

<sup>28</sup> Cynthia Enloe, *Bananas, Beaches and Bases: Making Feminist Sense of International Politics* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, University of California Press, 2000), p. 62.

<sup>29</sup> Shireen Hassim, 'The Limits of Popular Democracy: Women's Organisations, Feminism and the UDF,' *Transformation: Critical Perspectives on Southern Africa* 51 (2003): pp. 48-73, here p. 50.

---

<sup>30</sup> Catherine Campbell, 'Identity and Gender in a Changing Society: The Social Identity of South African Township Youth,' (PhD Thesis, University of Bristol, 1992); pp. 322-323.

<sup>31</sup> Interview with female ANC activist, 14 April 2013.

<sup>32</sup> Interview with female activist, member of FEDTRAW, 14 April 2013.

<sup>33</sup> Sheila Meintjes, 'Political Violence and Gender: a neglected relation in South Africa's struggle for democracy,' *Politikon* 25:2 (1998): pp. 95-109, here p. 105.

<sup>34</sup> Matthew Krentz, *An Unofficial War: Inside the Conflict in Pietermaritzburg* (Cape Town, David Phillip, 1990), p. 45.

<sup>35</sup> From prison, Nelson ordered Winnie to disband the Mandela United Football Club, but she refused to do so. Anthony Sampson, *Mandela: The Authorised Biography* (London, HarperCollins, 1999), p. 374.

<sup>36</sup> Interview with female ANC activist, 14 April 2013.

<sup>37</sup> Interview with female COSAS member, 17 April 2013.

<sup>38</sup> Interview with female COSAS member, 14 May 2014.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*

---

<sup>40</sup> Chris Coulter, 'Female Fighters in the Sierra Leone War: Challenging the Assumptions?' *Feminist Review* 88 (2008): pp.54-73, here p. 63.

<sup>41</sup> Paula Fray, *The Sunday Star*, 18 February 1990.

<sup>42</sup> Janine Van Rooyen. 'An Analysis of the Representation of Winnie Madikizela-Mandela in Antjie Krog's *Country of My Skull* and Njabulo Ndebele's *The Cry of Winnie Mandela*,' (Masters Thesis, Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University, 2007), p. 65.

<sup>43</sup> Meintjes, 'Winnie Madikizela Mandela.'

<sup>44</sup> Brenna Munro, 'Nelson, Winnie, and the Politics of Gender,' in R. Barnard (ed) *The Cambridge Companion to Nelson Mandela* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), pp. 92-112, here p. 95.

<sup>45</sup> Winnie Mandela, *Part of My Soul*, edited by Anne Benjamin and adapted by Mary Benson (London: Penguin, 1985), p. 85.

<sup>46</sup> K. Harris documentary, 'Soweto: the passion...the pain,' 1998.

<sup>47</sup> Interview with male COSAS leader, 14 April 2013.

---

<sup>48</sup> Interview with male COSAS member, 12 May 2014.

<sup>49</sup> In SADET's multivolume *The Road to Democracy in South Africa*, Winnie is mentioned as a central figure in the ANC underground. However, no in depth study has yet been conducted into her role in the underground. Gregory Houston writes that Winnie initiated the first underground cell in the Soweto network in 1966, was involved in recruiting activists for training abroad and provided military training. Janet Cherry demonstrates that even in Brandfort, Winnie played a 'significant role' in the underground, providing support, money and clothing to MK members and their families. See Gregory Houston, 'The post-Rivonia ANC/SACP underground,' in SADET (eds) *The Road to Democracy in South Africa* vol. 1 (Pretoria: UNISA, 2004), 644-649; Janet Cherry, 'Hidden Histories of the Eastern Cape Underground,' in SADET (eds) *The Road to Democracy in South Africa* vol. 4 (Pretoria: UNISA, 2010), 431; see also Chitja Twala and Jeremy Seekings, 'Activist networks and political protest in the Free State, 1983-1990,' in *ibid*, p. 769.

<sup>50</sup> Interview with male COSAS leader, 19 March 2013.

<sup>51</sup> Interview with male PAC youth activist, 11 April 2013.

---

<sup>52</sup> Jeremy Seekings, 'Gender Ideology and Township Politics in the 1980's,' *Agenda* 7:10 (1991): pp.77-88.

<sup>53</sup> *Pretoria News*, 15 April 1986.

<sup>54</sup> Gilbey, *The Lady*, p. 145.

<sup>55</sup> Sekibakiba Peter Lekgoathi, 'The United Democratic Front, Political Resistance and Local Struggles in the Vaal and West Rand Townships in the 1980s,' in SADET (eds) *The Road to Democracy in South Africa*, vol. 2 part 1 (Pretoria: UNISA, 2010), p. 568.

<sup>56</sup> du Preez Bezdrob, *Winnie Mandela*, pp. 220-221.

<sup>57</sup> Munro, 'Nelson, Winnie, and the Politics of Gender,' 102.

<sup>58</sup> *The Sunday Star*, 15 March 1987.

<sup>59</sup> *The Sowetan*, 27 January 1987.

<sup>60</sup> *The Sunday Star*, 27 May 1990.

<sup>61</sup> Winnie was originally given a five-year jail sentence in 1991. However, after an appeal in 1993 she was cleared of charges of accessory to assault and her sentence was commuted to a R15,000 fine.

---

<sup>62</sup> Anthea Jeffery, *People's War: New Light on the Struggle for South Africa* (Johannesburg: Jonathan Ball Publishers, 2009), p. xxxi.

<sup>63</sup> Nelson Mandela, *Long Walk to Freedom* (London: Abacus, 1995), p. 194.

<sup>64</sup> Munro, 'Nelson, Winnie, and the Politics of Gender,' p. 103.

<sup>65</sup> Sampson, *Mandela*, pp. 348; 373.

<sup>66</sup> Holmes, 'All too Familiar,' p. 96.

<sup>67</sup> *The Sunday Times*, 19 February 1989.

<sup>68</sup> Phillip van Niekerk, 'Winnie Falls from Grace,' *Mail & Guardian*, 17 May 1991.

<sup>69</sup> *Phoenix*, 30 April 1986.

<sup>70</sup> A loose alliance of anti-apartheid groups formed in 1988 in response to government restrictions placed on the United Democratic Front (UDF), made up primarily of UDF and ANC supporters.

<sup>71</sup> South African History Archive, Johannesburg, AL2957 A4.19, Statement by MDM on Winnie Mandela, 16 February 1989.

<sup>72</sup> *South African Press Association*, 27 November 1997.

---

<sup>73</sup> Martin Meredith, *Nelson Mandela: A Biography* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1997), p. 382.

<sup>74</sup> Sampson, *Mandela*, p. 379.

<sup>75</sup> Meredith, *Nelson Mandela*, p. 437.

<sup>76</sup> Sampson, *Mandela*, pp. 378; 449.

<sup>77</sup> Interview with male COSAS member, 4 April 2013.

<sup>78</sup> Interview with male COSAS member, 14 April 2013.

<sup>79</sup> Interview with male COSAS leader, 17 April 2013.

<sup>80</sup> Jean Bethke Elshtain, *Women and War* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), p. 169.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 170.

<sup>82</sup> Munro, 'Nelson, Winnie, and the Politics of Gender,' p. 107.

<sup>83</sup> Interview with female COSAS member, 14 April 2013.

<sup>84</sup> *The Natal Mercury*, 27 September 1990.

<sup>85</sup> *Pretoria News*, 15 April 1986.

<sup>86</sup> *The Star*, 13 April 1992.

---

<sup>87</sup> *The Sunday Star*, 19 February 1989.

<sup>88</sup> *The Sunday Star*, 12 February 1989.

<sup>89</sup> Laura Sjoberg and Caron E. Gentry, *Mothers, Monsters, Whores: Women's Violence in Global Politics* (New York: Zed Books, 2007), p. 12.

<sup>90</sup> Munro, 'Nelson, Winnie, and the Politics of Gender,' p. 102.

<sup>91</sup> Sampson, *Mandela*, p. 449.

<sup>92</sup> *The Sunday Star*, 26 May 1991; R. Dowden, 'How South Africa's Sleeping Beauty became Lady Macbeth,' *The Times*, 25 April 2003.

<sup>93</sup> William Shakespeare, *Macbeth* (Cambridge: Proquest LLC, 1997), Act I Scene V.

<sup>94</sup> Holmes, 'All too Familiar,' pp. 97-98.

<sup>95</sup> Tapiwa Zimudzi, 'African women, violent crime and the criminal law in colonial Zimbabwe, 1900-1952,' *Journal of Southern African Studies* 30 (2004): pp. 499-518, here p. 507.



---

<sup>96</sup> Stacey Hynd, ‘‘Deadlier than the male?’ Women and the death penalty in colonial Kenya and Nyasaland, c. 1920-57,’ *Stichproben*, 12 (2007): pp. 13-33, here p. 17.

<sup>97</sup> Mamphela Ramphele, ‘Political Womanhood in South Africa: The Embodiment of Ambiguity,’ *Daedalus* 125 (1996): pp. 99-117, here p. 113.

<sup>98</sup> Rachel Holmes, ‘Queer comrades: Winnie Mandela and the Moffies,’ *Social Text* 52/53 (1997): pp. 161-180, here p. 175.

<sup>99</sup> *The Star*, 13 April 1992.

<sup>100</sup> Holmes, ‘Queer Comrades,’ p. 175.

<sup>101</sup> John Carlin, *The Independent*, quoted in Sampson, *Mandela*, p. 449.

<sup>102</sup> *Pretoria News*, 15 April 1986.

<sup>103</sup> *Pretoria News*, 11 August 1987.

<sup>104</sup> Millard W. Arnold, ‘‘The Mother of the Nation’ on Trial for Kidnapping,’ *Baltimore Sun*, 3 February 1991.

<sup>105</sup> David Willers, ‘Mother of the Nation?’ *The Natal Witness*, 29 June 1990.

<sup>106</sup> Mary Braid, ‘Winnie Mandela: The Mother of the Nation or a Murderous Bully?’ *The Independent*, 26 September 1997.

- 
- <sup>107</sup> Sampson, *Mandela*, p. 374.
- <sup>108</sup> Hynd, ‘‘Deadlier than the Male’ p. 17.
- <sup>109</sup> Interview with the BBC, quoted in *The Argus*, 22 February 1989.
- <sup>110</sup> Personal archives of George Bizos, Legal Resource Centre, Johannesburg. Case No. 167.90, ‘The State vs. Nomzamo Winifred Mandela,’ 16-17 April 1991.
- <sup>111</sup> *The Citizen*, 9 May 1991.
- <sup>112</sup> *Sunday Times*, 29 January 1989.
- <sup>113</sup> *The Sowetan*, 1 February 1989.
- <sup>114</sup> Gail Reagon, ‘Winnie Mandela: The Pain and the Passion,’ *Speak*, October 1994.
- <sup>115</sup> *The Star*, 17 April 1991.
- <sup>116</sup> *The Citizen*, 17 April 1991.
- <sup>117</sup> *Weekly Mail*, 23 May 1991.
- <sup>118</sup> *The Star*, 17 February 1990.
- <sup>119</sup> *The Natal Witness*, 1 February 1990; *The Star*, 27 January 1990.
- <sup>120</sup> Janaki Nair, ‘Feminising Winnie: Mandela’s US Tour,’ *Economic and Political Weekly* 25:33 (1990): p. 1824.
- <sup>121</sup> Munro, ‘Nelson, Winnie, and the Politics of Gender,’ 109.