
ARTICLES

WOMEN, RESISTANCE AND AFRICA: ARMED STRUGGLES IN ZIMBABWE, SOUTH AFRICA AND ERITREA

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REFLEXIVE STATEMENT

The three Australian-based authors have completed doctorates on African liberation movements. Following fieldwork in Eritrea, Zimbabwe and among South African exiles in the United Kingdom, we each reached a similar conclusion - that the role that women played in African national liberation struggles had been inadequately acknowledged. We were concerned that dominant interpretations of the content and context of resistance had excluded non-combat activities necessary to sustain military action. Drawing on the work on resistance by Foucault and Scott, we became interested in extending the range of theoretical material available to those engaged in analyzing the relationship between gender and national liberation in the African context.

INTRODUCTION

We have yet to be overwhelmed by research that investigates the role of women in the armed struggles waged by the liberation movements in Africa, 'the countless women whose stories are hidden and yet without whom liberation politics could never occur'. ² However, the literature that does exist tends to favor a particular approach, claiming that women and men fought equally. For example, a paper called 'The Role of Women in the Struggle for Liberation in Zimbabwe, Namibia and South Africa' was prepared in 1980 for the World Conference of the United Nations Decade for Women held in Copenhagen ('the Copenhagen paper'). The Copenhagen paper, which later evolved into a book by Richard Lapchick and Stephanie Urdang, argued that women fought equally with men in these liberation struggles. The material, however, remained thin on evidence and failed to explore several important issues including the under-representation of women in senior positions in the liberation movements or their armed wings. Similar claims about the involvement of women in liberation struggles can be found in relation to Eritrea and Tigray. ³

More recently, in a series of African case studies, there has been a challenge to both the evidence and the theory used to support the claims we seek

to develop in this paper.⁴ Although the experience of colonialism and neo-colonialism differed over the continent, there are significant commonalities in the ways in which national liberation movements incorporated women into armed struggle. In this article, we draw on primary and secondary research material gathered as part of our work on the Zimbabwean, South African and Eritrean liberation movements to do two things: first, we question whether there is sufficient evidence to support the picture painted by authors such as Lapchick and Urdang; second, drawing on a Foucauldian conception of resistance, we suggest that there are more effective ways of understanding the part that women played in the armed struggles.⁵

REPRESENTATIONS OF THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN THE ARMED STRUGGLE

Women have been presented in mutually contradictory ways by liberation movements in Africa. On the one hand, women have been represented as *symbols of tradition* in societies that had been all but destroyed by colonization and minority regimes. Alternatively, they have been portrayed as *symbols of liberation* and modernization.⁶

In the former case, women have been stereotyped as 'mothers of the nation', repositories of revered qualities (such as care and concern), vital to the struggle. As nurturers, they gave birth to the next generation of soldiers and fed and supported the current ones. In Zimbabwe women were applauded as providing the nurturing and maternal foundations for liberation, since they were birthing and then raising future liberation fighters. The Zimbabwean African Peoples Union (ZAPU) argued that even 'if these mothers failed to liberate their country then these children born into the turmoil would not fail.'⁷ Similarly, in South Africa women were dubbed 'titans in the struggle,' valued as nurturers of the revolution by giving their sons to the struggle and supporting the war effort as wives and mothers of the fighters.⁸ In Eritrea, the Eritrean Liberation Front (ELF) valued women as caretakers for injured men and providers of moral support for those men involved in the struggle. The subsequent Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF) also respected the role women played as producers of male fighters for the struggle. A well-known narrative deals with an Eritrean woman who lost all her sons and her husband in the liberation struggle. Her sacrifice meant that she was revered as 'Mother Eritrea.' In an interview in 1998, 'Mother Eritrea' explained that: 'if I were younger towards the end of the struggle I would have produced more sons and given them to the revolution as well. That is what it means to be an Eritrean woman.'⁹ So, all three struggles linked women to motherhood and the continued existence and reproduction of the imagined national communities of Zimbabwe, South Africa and Eritrea.¹⁰

On the other hand, liberation movements also tended to glorify the position of women in the struggle, portraying women as playing an equal part to men. This ideal of equality was presented stripped of any gender-based problems that women faced among the rank and file. In the case of Zimbabwe, the Copenhagen paper provided a brief overview of women's active involvement in the early nationalist political stage of the struggle. It then cited information obtained only from the few senior ranking women within the Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU) and Zimbabwe African Peoples Union (ZAPU) describing how women were 'initially overlooked as soldiers' but by 1973 were being recruited as combatants and trained in the same way as men.¹¹

One of the most striking images provided of women's involvement in the Zimbabwean struggle was that of a woman warrior with an AK47 and a baby on her back. This representation emphasized the notion that women fight equally with men on the frontlines of a guerrilla war. More recently, ZANU officials have claimed that by 1978 'women detachments were put in the Manica Province and Tete for actual combat duties led by their women commanders and proved to be successful in their operations.'¹²

The image of the female guerrilla was also popularized in South Africa in the late 1980s when a woman known as Zoya was apparently involved in attacks on township dwellers who collaborated with Pretoria. After two weeks of operations, she was killed by security forces in a shoot out in the East Rand.¹³ In a short section on the South African movements in exile, the Copenhagen paper claimed that women were 'very active' in both the African National Congress and the Pan-Africanist Congress and were 'being given extensive training to perform functions at all levels' in the areas of health, welfare, education, representing the movements internationally and being prepared for armed combat: 'Women, along with men, reenter South Africa at grave risk in order to carry out missions for the liberation movements'.¹⁴

Eritrean historiography and national myth presents many symbols of female Eritrean valor and individual acts of bravery. The well-worn story of Nebiat, a barmaid who was instrumental in orchestrating the death of a high-ranking Ethiopian general, is one example.¹⁵ The Muslim Tigren singer and poet, Mama Zeinab, who worked on the front-line, also featured prominently on the 1988 annual EPLF publicity poster and remains a figurehead today. As she explained:

I came from a conservative and traditional religious family background and the EPLF changed me. I used to sing and write poetry for the EPLF, for revolution and liberation... I am famous because I am a woman...¹⁶

So significant is Mama Zeinab's role in Eritrean national memory that the Ministry of Information documented all her works and presented her publicly as a 'strong, spirited woman, [who] is not held back by tradition.'¹⁷ In Eritrea, heroines such as Nebiat and Mama Zeinab were singled out for public consumption and the large numbers of female fighters were strongly etched into nationalist narrative, despite the hardships female participants faced both during and after the struggle.

It is not always obvious why these particular representations of women were emphasised by the liberation movements. However, similar representations have been explained in several ways within research on women in the military in other parts of the world. For example, Cynthia Enloe suggested that representations of women were incorporated in a masculine glorification of war and resistance while Dafna Izraeli argued that the Israel Defence Force used women to appeal to hegemonic masculine competitiveness.¹⁸ Other writers have claimed that liberation movements use the fiction of gender equity to attain international legitimacy as a 'modern' force. Finally, Susan Rigdon in China and Nicole Ladewig in Algeria argued that stories of women guerillas may be deployed to recruit more women into the struggle, enhance morale and patriotic support from the entire nation, or emphasise national unity.¹⁹

In this article, we question the value of these heroic representations of women and explore what we know about the parts that women played in the Zimbabwean, South African and Eritrean struggles.

WOMEN IN THE ZIMBABWE LIBERATION ARMIES

The role of women in the Zimbabwean struggle was crucial. Women in the villages provided food, clothing and shelter, often risking their lives to assist the guerrillas.²⁰ Young women and men became *chimbwidos* and *mujibas* (messengers and carriers) providing information on the whereabouts of Rhodesian soldiers to the guerrillas. When the armed struggle began in earnest after 1972, many women took on roles as cooks, medical personal and teachers both inside Rhodesia and in exile across borders in the guerrilla training camps in Zambia and Mozambique. Women also trained as guerrilla fighters.²¹

By 1976, thousands of young women had joined the ZANU and ZAPU liberation armies, Zimbabwe African National Liberation Army (ZANLA) and Zimbabwe People's Revolutionary Army (ZIPRA) respectively.²² The traditionally male-led nationalist movement had to adjust for increasing numbers of women with military training, and many more women who wanted training. In the training camps, many women experienced equality with men, which they had not experienced before. However, the inclusion of women in the training camps resulted in disruptions to traditional gender roles and subsequently a

'woman problem' emerged, especially within ZANU and ZANLA.

These problems stemmed from the incorporation of women into a guerilla army, and included challenges and changes to traditional gender dynamics, ²³ restructuring of a traditionally male environment to cater for thousands of young women and, apparently, 'dissension' between women themselves. In some cases women were subjected to rape by senior male commanders or were forced into 'sex-for-soap' negotiations in order to survive in the camps.²⁴ However, some senior women dismissed claims of sexual assault and harassment focusing instead on the allegedly 'loose' and 'wanton' behavior of female cadres. In an interview with Christine Qunta, Teurai Ropa the head of the Women's Department in ZANU argued that the main problem was that the young women were 'undisciplined' and 'misbehaving' and this was 'bad for the revolution.'²⁵ Thus, sexual misadventures were explained in terms of female misbehavior rather than in terms of the inherent masculine structure of the Zimbabwean liberation fronts.

In contrast to the glorification of women's roles as combatants, some women have portrayed their activities in a different manner. In several interviews with Tanya Lyons, women discussed how they mainly carried weapons and ammunition across the borders - 'an inglorious but necessary task'.²⁶ For example, Maria stated that: 'One of the important roles that was played by female ex-combatants was in the transportation of ammunition between Mozambique and Zimbabwe'.²⁷

Margaret Dongo highlighted the military importance of women carrying supplies to the front, and the difficulties of carrying weapons of war:

...after my military training I was trained as a medical assistant... part of my duties were in actual fact to make sure we keep supplies and also make sure that every section that goes in the fore front has enough medical and first aid kits, material and so forth. And I went to the extent of the border. In actual fact there was a time when it was very difficult for women to come in during the early 1970s. And what our role as women was, we were the carriers of ammunition. It was more heavier than actually instituting the war itself - shooting... we would carry a cane of bullets (sic), then medical supplies, your gun to protect you and everything else.²⁸

The Rhodesian military appear to have been aware of the role played by some women. Bob North of the Rhodesian Intelligence Corps remembered seeing five apparently pregnant women carrying water down to a river:

So we went down to check it out. Landmines. Under their

jumpers. It was incredible. And they're heavy, those things. Incredible. Five of the buggers. Ten land mines. One down their backs and one around the front, on rope. So I'd say that the women were pretty involved.²⁹

Of course, in these roles women did engage in combat. For example, Monica said that she was 'involved in more than four battles [but] women were doing most of the carrying of weapons etc.'³⁰ Nyarai said that she 'was involved in many attacks near the border, we were carrying the materials and the commander said 'there is the enemy in our front, you can defend yourselves, *fire fire!*'³¹ However, Nhamo argued that 'women did not go to fight battles, they only ever went into the liberated zones to stay in villages.'³² This suggests that women played a variety of roles in the Zimbabwean struggle; claims that women fought equally gloss over a more complex picture.

WOMEN IN UMKHONTO WE SIZWE (MK)

In South Africa, women had always participated in the work of the African National Congress.³³ However, the founders of the South African National Native Congress classified women as 'auxiliary' members in 1912 and women were only allowed to become full members in 1941. Women developed parallel organizations such as the Women's League and the Federation of South African Women that drew up the Women's Charter in 1954. When it addressed the position of women, the Congress Movement subordinated the struggle against sexism to the fight against apartheid: women's liberation would flow from national liberation.³⁴

During the 1960s, ANC women were involved in *Umkhonto we Sizwe*, the armed wing of the ANC. However, numbers remained small - 13 in 1967 - and only increased to any significant level after 1976. By 1991, Cock estimated that women constituted approximately 20 per cent of MK personnel. Women trained with the men and gained the same skills:

In Angola, we lived in the camps. The women did exactly the same training as the men. Exactly the same. Drilling, handling weapons, topography... everything.³⁵

Women were deployed in most departments, including those necessitating combat. However according to Jacqueline Molefe, the most senior woman in MK, women were more likely to be found in clerical and office roles. As a result Oliver Tambo, President of the ANC, reported that after 25 years of MK there were still no women's names 'inscribed in the roll-call of honour of our

revolution'.³⁶ All but one of the top positions were occupied by men. The exception was Molefe herself who was appointed head of communications in 1983. Although some ANC leaders had opposed recruitment of women to MK, Molefe told Cock that women had been recognized as equals in MK, and had earned respect from male cadres, though she had found that 'you have to prove yourself over and over again'.³⁷

As in the Zimbabwean case, some South African women did report problems operating within male-dominated structures. For example, Goldblatt and Meintjes found that although women were very reluctant to talk about sexual abuse in the ANC camps in Angola, there had been allegations of rape. One of the women interviewed, *Thenjiwe Mtintso*, also discussed how women had been raped in ANC safe houses within South Africa. Goldblatt and Meintjes noted that the Angolan allegations had been ignored in internal ANC investigations into camp violence and glossed over in the ANC's submission to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.³⁸

Thandi Modise, Deputy President of the ANC Women's League, is one of the few former MK cadres to have spoken about sexual harassment in the Angolan camps:³⁹

Somebody had been feeling our bodies at night. So we started finding out from the other rooms and they say, 'Yes, definitely but who will talk because we are not sure who does this?' So we laid a trap. And one night we get this guy. Now it's dark and he was a big man and he just threw us off in the passage and ran out... We ran after this man and as we ran we were screaming, all of us, all 20 women... because the men hid him. We wanted this man because he'd been fondling our bodies for months. They hid him...

According to Modise, male antagonism towards the MK women as a result of *this incident continued for a considerable time.*

They were against us. There was such a strong negative feeling against us. As if we were wrong and this man was right to come night after night and feel our bodies... they protected him... up to this day we cannot say whether it was just one man doing it or whether there were a number of them.

Perhaps this is not surprising given the evidence that exists of the prevalence of patriarchal attitudes within the ANC. For example, while the leading accounts of the development of the ANC in exile pay almost no attention to the position of

women,⁴⁰ there is some evidence that South African women found it more difficult than men to maintain their political activities in exile, both in Europe and in the Frontline States.

It was difficult in my unit in Lesotho, because I was the only woman. And one thing I've realized - I don't know if it's within the Movement, maybe I could also say globally - but it's very difficult for men to take women seriously. If they don't undermine you, they're going to feel that you are a threat.⁴¹

As in South Africa in the 1940s and 1950s, many women found themselves relegated to providing support for the men. According to Mavivi Manzini, traditional divisions of labour existed among some ANC members in Lusaka.⁴² Further evidence of the prevalence of patriarchal attitudes within the ANC comes from Frene Ginwala. Ginwala was one of the members of Congress sent abroad by Tambo in 1960 to establish the ANC presence in exile. She worked for the ANC in Britain and Africa and in 1990 was the head of the Political Committee of the Office of the President of the ANC. In her interview with Hilda Bernstein, Ginwala said that while she had seen some progress in the movement, in the past women were not taken seriously in the ANC. According to Ginwala, even those women who achieved senior positions in the movement were appointed to be secretary rather than chair of a committee or leader of a delegation.⁴³ Once again, it seems that the majority of researchers avoided the more tendentious issues raised by an investigation of gender roles within the liberation movements.

WOMEN AND THE ERITREAN PEOPLE'S LIBERATION FRONT

Eritrea is a multi-ethnic state forged through Italian and British colonial rule and, more importantly, 30 years of struggle for national liberation from Ethiopia between 1961 and 1991. Throughout these periods, women have played diverse and often contradictory roles. However, it was their role as combatants under the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF) - which later evolved into the ruling state party - that received most coverage. Female combatants served as a symbol of the EPLF's modernization indicating that Eritreans were politically and socially developed and therefore deserving of independence. As a result, foreign journalists, photographers and academics were encouraged to focus on female fighters.⁴⁴

Yet, most coverage left many unanswered questions about the value of female fighters and the nature of combat. The discourse of the EPLF addressed aspects of these dilemmas, especially in its attitude towards the Eritrean Liberation Front (ELF), the rival liberation front from which the EPLF split.

Women were portrayed as subordinate in the ELF because of the negligible numbers who fought. As a National Union of Eritrean Women (NUEW) leaflet explained, the ELF:

...fully espoused the women-denigrating reactionary ideology, [and] prohibited them from performing their revolutionary duties... the participation of women in the armed struggle was thus greatly discouraged and limited until the 1970s, [however they were] active in preparing food for the fighters, propounding revolutionary music and other useful, even if *subordinate roles* (collecting and passing on to the Front information on enemy movements etc.). [authors' emphasis]⁴⁵

Non-Eritrean visitors reinforced this view. Nicole Cowan, for example, argued that the women who were included in the ELF were 'invariably confined to the traditional female roles of cooking and nursing.'⁴⁶ Conversely, it was only within the EPLF, she claimed, that 'women [were] deliberately and seriously included in the military and political struggle for independence' and allowed to 'fight and die in the Front alongside men.'⁴⁷ Death and maiming became central symbols of resistance for the EPLF and the NUEW. Both organizations emphasized the many women who:

...lost their eyes, legs or other parts fighting for the glorious aims of dignity and liberation. There are those who have also lost their lives in combat, those heroes will always be remembered by their people with great pride... All these feats of heroism that Eritrean women are demonstrating in practice are tearing apart the reactionary feudal myth that 'women are weaklings.'⁴⁸

In apparent contrast to the ELF, EPLF women were symbols of sacrifice as well as representatives of national modernity. They were modern because they had earned the right to bear arms and they constituted symbols of sacrifice as they were killed or torn apart in a demonstration of their love for the nation. A woman's death or disfigurement allowed her to transcend boundaries and enter the male world of martyrdom. As Trish Silkin, another non-Eritrean, observed:

[s]ome male fighters have married women so disabled through battle injuries that the men, inevitably, will take the major responsibility for domestic chores, and such examples are cited by the EPLF as instances of old practices and prejudices breaking down.⁴⁹

As with other liberation struggles, these transformations did not necessarily

continue after national liberation was won. Indeed, these representations gloss over the difficulties that women faced as women during the struggles. For example, it was clear that non-combatant or auxiliary roles were subordinate options and that the EPLF and NUEW felt the consequences were grave:

[Under the ELF] women were barred from joining the ranks of the liberation army because of the feudal attitudes of the then existing leadership. Such an attitude prevented women from playing their revolutionary role of liberating their nation, their people and themselves to the full, and this had a negative effect on their development.⁵⁰

Of course, the NUEW document neither explains why non-combatant roles should be dismissed or why women developed as a group through fighting. Even more seriously, as in the Southern African cases, descriptions of Eritrean women in combat largely omit the failure of women to advance to senior positions as well as problems of sexual harassment and assault within the EPLF. The willingness of one survivor of sexual assault to talk about her experiences is therefore quite unusual:

I had not been a member for very long and I was very naive. I knew some fighters had sexual relationships with each other but I didn't want to. It became difficult for me with one man, and it is probably my fault for going out to the bushes alone one night, but he found me and raped me. I didn't tell anyone. I was scared of him and he never did it again, so I just tried to forget. After liberation, I did tell some people and I found I was not the only one this happened to but still no one talks about it, not in the open.⁵¹

The failure to accept former female combatants after independence stands in stark contrast to the representation of women in the struggle.⁵² Frequently, the difficulties that female ex-combatants faced were explained in terms of the failings of the individual women themselves: they were from 'bad families'; one of their parents was 'not Eritrean'; she was influenced by outside forces, and so on.⁵³ Rarely, if ever, has the official representation of the part played by women in Eritrean liberation been challenged publicly.

RECONSTITUTING RESISTANCE

In her book on war and gender in South Africa, Jacqueline Cock argued that if we were to recognize the contributions of different women to the liberation struggles, then we needed to alter our perception of what constituted resistance.

Cock suggested that we should move beyond a notion of resistance as combat, although she stopped short of exploring what such a concept might incorporate.⁵⁴

There is a line of argument within social theory that suggests that resistance should not only be looked for in formal political programs and military struggle, but in the practices of everyday life as people attempt to defy and reorder power relations.

For Foucault, for example, resistance is rooted in the minutiae of small-scale refusals. In Foucault's terms, resistance is revealed in the daily struggles at grass-roots level, among those whose fights are located in the fine meshes of the web of power. It is, for example, found in the 'opposition to the power of men over women, of parents over children, of psychiatry over the mentally ill, of medicine over the population, of administration over the ways people live.'⁵⁵ These types of resistance are transversal, targeted at immediate, local exercises of power over individuals. Consequently, there is

...a plurality of resistances, each of them a special case: resistances that are possible, necessary, improbable; others that are spontaneous, savage, solitary, concerted, rampant, or violent; still others that are quick to compromise, interested, or sacrificial.⁵⁶

In short, where there is power, there is resistance and this resistance occurs through a very wide range of diverse, heterogeneous locationally-specific practices. Resistance may be found in the recognizably political; it may also lie in informal political activity; it may also occur in everyday small-scale practices,⁵⁷ some of which may be gendered.⁵⁸ Resistance therefore incorporates:

...a warren of minute, individual, autonomous tactics and strategies which counter and inflect the visible facts of overall domination, and whose purposes and calculations, desires and choices resist any simple division into the political and the apolitical.⁵⁹

In the case of the armed struggle, resistance might include running missions, collecting intelligence, smuggling arms and ammunition or committing sabotage. However, it might also include the provision of food, information, shelter and equipment to members of combat units. As one Zimbabwean woman, Margaret Viki, stated:

...if the women had not been there the freedom fighters would not have won the war. Women did a great job. Cooking and providing

food for the freedom fighters was a way of fighting on its own. Women cooked and were beaten by [Rhodesian] soldiers for doing this.⁶⁰

Similar accounts emerged from Eritrean women who participated in the resistance movement. One informant, Leila, explained her role in the struggle:

I bundled up some food like a baby under my clothes and found fighters to feed them... another woman once took a gun and two knives this way too, it was a good way because we were never checked, not in the early years. No one ever thought a woman would be hiding a gun.⁶¹

It may be tempting to be dismissive of these forms of resistance. However as James Scott recognized 'it is well to recall that the aggregation of thousands upon thousands of such "petty" acts of resistance have dramatic economic and political effects.'⁶²

For many kinds of resistance, we have good reason to expect that actors will not divulge their activities. The safety of them, their families and supporters may depend on silence, their struggle may require anonymity and their intentions may be so natural as to be unremarkable, or unable to be articulated. Instead, James Scott suggested that resistance may be articulated through hidden transcripts. As indignities and symbolic violence increase against subordinate groups, more of the hidden transcripts may become visible, culminating in more acts of open defiance. An analysis of the role of women in liberation struggles may look (as we have done) at armed struggle. It should, however, also be alert to far more subtle forms of resistance, many of which occur in secret for fear of the possible reaction not only of host and home regimes but also of the disapproval of male members of the movements.⁶³

CONCLUSION

Peniston-Bird concluded that it is the presence of both consistency and diversity in the experiences of women in the military that makes this area so rich for analysis.⁶⁴ While we acknowledge the diverse nature of the colonial, neocolonial and postliberation experiences, we maintain that there are considerable similarities in the representations and experiences of women's involvement in the armed struggles of Zimbabwe, South Africa and Eritrea.

In this article, we have argued that women's participation was neither simply 'glorious' nor 'equal' with men. While some women did engage the enemy in military action, patriarchal attitudes structured the division of labor in ZANLA, MK and the EPLF. Women were far less likely than men to be involved

in armed engagement and much more likely to be found in support roles and, as Urdang noted in her work on Mozambique, other inglorious but important tasks. They undertook them with little acknowledgement. Their work was carried out under threat of violence from the state institutions and sometimes in the face of sexist attitudes, sexual harassment and perhaps in some cases even sexual assault from their colleagues.

If we are serious about acknowledging the complex nature of women's positions in the armed struggles, following Cock and Schwartz and drawing on the theoretical work of Foucault and Scott, we suggest that in wars of national liberation the content and context of resistance should be widened to include, at the very least, non-combat activities necessary to sustain military action. Any narrower view of resistance might either exclude the part played by many women in liberation or encourage the sort of glorification of relatively uncommon activities in which a significant part of the analysis of these African liberation struggles has engaged.

It is possible that the failure to acknowledge during the struggle the roles that women were playing in resistance had serious consequences for women in postliberation societies making it easier for their voices to be marginalized.⁶⁵ We claim that a re-conception of the role of women in the armed struggles is important for future scholars but it may also be of value for subsequent liberation movements and postliberation societies as they grapple with national identities, myths and gender politics.

ENDNOTES

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² AnnMarie Wolpe, *The Long Way Home* (London: Virago, 1994).

³ Jacklyn Cock, *Colonels and Cadres: War and Gender in South Africa* (Cape Town: Oxford University Press, 1991); Amrit Wilson, *The Challenge Road: Women and the Eritrean Revolution* (London: Earthscan Publications, 1991); Jenny Hammond and Nell Druce, eds., *Sweeter than Honey: Ethiopian Women and Revolution, Testimonies of Tigrayan Women* (Trenton: Red Sea Press, 1990). See also report by Meredeth Turshen of Sondra Hale's 1999 paper at Johannesburg conference 'The Aftermath: Women in Post-war Reconstruction'. <http://www.africapolicy.org/docs99/aft9909.htm> However, Hale's research needs

to be considered in light of her more extensive and critical work concerning gender politics in the Sudan. See Sondra Hale, *Gender Politics in the Sudan: Islamism, Socialism, and the State* (New York: Westview Press, 1996).

⁴ Sita Ranchod-Nilsson and Mary A. Tetreault, *Women, States and Nationalism: At Home in the Nation?* (London: Routledge, 2000); Meredith Turshen and Clotilde Twagiramariya, eds., *What Women do in War Time: Gender and Conflict in Africa* (London: Zed Books, 1998); Marnia Lazreg, *The Eloquence of Silence: Algerian Women in Question* (London: Routledge, 1994); Georgina Waylen, *Gender and Politics in the Third World* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1996); Georgina Waylen and Vicky Randall, eds., *Gender, Politics and the State* (London: Routledge, 1998); Meredith Turshen, Sheila Meintjes and Anu Pillay, eds., *The Aftermath: Women in Post-Conflict Transformation* (London, Zed Press, 2002); Marie-Aimee Helie-Lucas, 'Women, Nationalism, and Religion in the Algerian Liberation Struggle,' Nigel C. Gibson, ed., *Rethinking Fanon: The Continuing Dialogue* (New York: Humanity Books, 1999).

⁵ Our research included fieldwork in Eritrea, Zimbabwe and, to a lesser extent, South Africa and the United Kingdom. In the case of Eritrea, Christine Mason interviewed 191 Eritreans, 144 of which were women involved in the liberation struggle. The informants were from both the Eritrean Liberation Front and Eritrean People's Liberation Front. Tanya Lyons' field work in Zimbabwe included life-narrative interviews with 18 female former combatants. Finally, Mark Israel's work included 75 interviews with South African political exiles in the United Kingdom, although his research was not specifically about women or Umkhonto We Sizwe (MK). See C. Mason *Gender, Ethnicity and Nationalism in Eritrea* (Unpublished PhD Thesis, School of Political Science and International Relations, University of New South Wales, 2002); Tanya Lyons, *Guns and Guerrilla Girls: Women in the Zimbabwean National Liberation Struggle* (New Jersey: Africa World Press, in press); Mark Israel, *South African Political Exiles in the United Kingdom* (London: Macmillan, 1999).

⁶ Nira Yuval-Davis, *Gender and Nation* (London: Sage, 1997).

⁷ 'Come Forward and Feed the Children,' *The Zimbabwe Review*, official organ of ZAPU (from Microfilm collection in the Zimbabwe National Archives), June 5th 1978.

⁸ African National Congress, *ANC calls for advance to People's Power*, 8 January (Lusaka/London: African National Congress, 1987); Rebecca Matlou (Psued. of Sankie Dolly Mthembi-Mahanyele), 'Mother Patriot,' in *Malibongwe. ANC Women: Poetry is also their Weapon*, ed. Sono Molefe (Stockholm: Sida Publications, 1983). See Deborah Gaitskell and Elaine Unterhalter, 'Mothers of the Nation: a Comparative Analysis of Nation, Race and Motherhood in Afrikaner Nationalism and the African National Congress,' in *Women-Nation-State*, eds. Nira Yuval-Davis and Floya Anthias (London: Macmillan, 1989), 58.

- ⁹ Interview by Christine Mason with 'Mother Eritrea', Asmara, Eritrea, 1998.
- ¹⁰ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (London: Verso, 1991).
- ¹¹ Richard E Lapchick and Stephanie Urdang, *Oppression and Resistance* (London: Greenwood, 1982), 106.
- ¹² ZANU Archives Women's Affairs Files: Tsatsayi Constantino, ZANU Archivist, 'The Role of Women in the Liberation Struggle,' unpublished notes, Harare, 1996.
- ¹³ See Cynthia Enloe, *Does Khaki Become You? The Militarisation of Women's Lives* (London: Pluto, 1983); Jacklyn Cock, *op cit*, 166.
- ¹⁴ A/CONF 94/5, 33.
- ¹⁵ Wilson, *op.cit*, 82.
- ¹⁶ Interview with Mama Zeinab by Christine Mason, Afabet, Eritrea, 1998.
- ¹⁷ Interview with Ministry of Information official by Christine Mason, Asmara, Eritrea, 1999.
- ¹⁸ Cynthia Enloe, *Maneuvers: The International Politics of Militarizing Women's Lives* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000); Dafna N. Izraeli, 'Gendering Military Service in the Israel Defence Forces,' in Gerard J. DeGroot and Corinna Peniston-Bird, *ibid.*, 263.
- ¹⁹ Susan Rigdon, 'Women in China's Changing Military Ethic,' in *A Soldier and a Woman: Sexual Integration in the Military*, eds, Gerard J. DeGroot and Corinna Peniston-Bird (Essex: Longman, 2000); Nicole F. Ladewig, 'Between Worlds: Algerian Women in Conflict,' in Gerard J. DeGroot and Corinna Peniston-Bird, *ibid.*
- ²⁰ Sita Ranchod-Nilsson, 'This Too is a Way of Fighting: Rural Women's Participation in Zimbabwe's Liberation War,' in *Women and Revolution in Africa, Asia and the New World*, ed. Mary A. Tetreault (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1994).
- ²¹ See Tanya Lyons, 'Guerrilla Girls and Women in the Zimbabwean National Liberation War,' in *Women and African Colonial History*, eds. Jean Allman and Susan Geiger (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2001); Ridzai Gidi, ZANLA Political Commissar, and Winnie Paradza in Julie Frederikse, *None But Ourselves: Masses vs Media in the Making of Zimbabwe* (Zimbabwe: OTAZI, 1982/1990), 70.
- ²² While exact numbers cannot be confirmed because so many documents were destroyed during the war, many claim that women constituted one-third of guerrilla forces. However, this figure conflates women in combative roles with women in non-combative roles. See Tanya Lyons, *op cit*, 2001.
- ²³ See Norma Kriger, *Zimbabwe's Guerrilla War: Peasant Voices* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992; and Harare: Baobab Books, 1995), for analysis of gender conflict in the struggle.

²⁴ These issues were brought into public debate in 1996 in Zimbabwe with the release of a film called 'Flame' that examined the stories of two women who joined the struggle. See Tanya Lyons, *op cit*, 1999.

²⁵ Interview with Teurai Ropa in *Women in Southern Africa*, ed. Christine N. Qunta (London: Allison and Busby, 1987), 148; ZANU Archives Women's Affairs File: Cde Catherine at ZANU Defence Secretariat, Speech to rally held at operational base on 20th July 1978, Pfutskeke Base (Present Teurai Ropa Nhongo plus 36 women cadres, plus six general staff and field Commander E. Mhuru).

²⁶ Stephanie Urdang, *And Still They Dance: Women, War and the Struggle for Change in Mozambique* (London: Earthscan, 1989), cited in Amina Mama, 'Sheroes and Villains: Conceptualizing Colonial and Contemporary Violence Against Women in Africa,' in *Feminist Genealogies, Colonial Legacies, Democratic Futures*, eds. M. Jacqui Alexander and Chandra Talpade Mohanty (New York and London: Routledge, 1997), 54.

²⁷ Interview with Maria by Tanya Lyons, Harare, September, 1996.

²⁸ Interview with Margaret Dongo by Tanya Lyons, Harare, March, 1997.

²⁹ In Julie Frederikse, *op cit*, OTAZI, Zimbabwe, 1982/1990, p.70.

³⁰ Interview with Monica by Tanya Lyons, Harare, August, 1996.

³¹ Interview with Nyarai by Tanya Lyons, Harare, September, 1996.

³² Interview with Nhamo by Tanya Lyons, Harare, September, 1996.

³³ Judy Kimble and Elaine Unterhalter, 'We Opened the Road for You, You Must Now Go Forward': ANC Women's Struggles, 1912-82,' *Feminist Review*, 12 (1982) : 11.

³⁴ 1990 interview in Jacklyn Cock, *op cit*, 1991.

³⁵ Interview with Gwendoline Sello by Hilda Bernstein, Tanzania 1989, in Hilda Bernstein, *The Rift: The Exile Experience of South Africans* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1994), 149.

³⁶ Statement of the National Executive Committee by Tambo on Heroes' Day, 16 December 1986. Cited in Jacklyn Cock, *op cit*, 1991.

³⁷ International Defence and Aid Fund, *To Honour Women's Day* (London: International Defence and Aid Fund, 1981); Nhlapo, Mavis, 'Interview,' *Sechaba* 17 (1981).

³⁸ See Beth Goldblatt and Sheila Meintjes, 'South African Women Demand the Truth,' in Meredith Turshen and Clotilde Twagiramariya, *op cit*, 1998.

³⁹ See interview by Robyn Curnow with Thandi Modise, 'Thandi Modise, a Woman in War,' *Agenda: Empowering Women and Gender Equity* 43 (2000) : 36.

⁴⁰ Tom Lodge, *Black Politics in South Africa since 1945* (London: Longman, 1983); Tom Lodge, 'State of Exile: The African National Congress of South Africa, 1976-86,' *Third World Quarterly* 9 (1987) : 1; Tom Lodge, 'The African National Congress in the 1990s,' in *South African Review: from 'Red Friday' to*

CODESA, eds. Glenn Moss and Ingrid Obery, 1992, 44; Stephen Ellis and Tsepo Sechaba, *Comrades Against Apartheid: The ANC and South African Communist Party in Exile* (London: James Currey, 1992).

⁴¹ Interview with Katleho Moloji by Hilda Bernstein, Toronto 1990, in Hilda Bernstein, *op cit*, 1994, 183; see also interview with Thenjiwe Mtintso MP, May 1996, Johannesburg, in Beth Goldblatt and Sheila Meintjes, 'South African Women Demand the Truth,' in Meredith Turshen and Clotilde Twagiramariya, *op cit*, 1998, 27.

⁴² Quoted in Diana E.H. Russell, *Lives of Courage: Women for a New South Africa* (New York: Basic Books, 1989).

⁴³ Hilda Bernstein, *op cit*, 1994.

⁴⁴ Christine Mason, *Gender, Nationalism and Revolution: Re-Assessing Women's Relationship with the Eritrean Liberation Front*, Working Paper #274, (Michigan State University, December 2001)

⁴⁵ National Union of Eritrean Women (nd) *Women in the Eritrean Revolution: Eye-Witness Reports and Testimonies*, Tipografia Moderna (held in the NUEW Resource Library, Asmara, Eritrea).

⁴⁶ Nicole-Anne Cowan, 'Women in Eritrea: An Eye-Witness Account,' *Review of African Political Economy* 27 (1983): 148.

⁴⁷ Cowan, *ibid.*, 148.

⁴⁸ National Union of Eritrean Women 'Women and Revolution in Eritrea,' in *Third World - Second Sex*, ed. Miranda Davies (London: Zed Press, 1983), 113.

⁴⁹ Trish Silkin, 'Eritrea: Women in Struggle,' *Third World Quarterly* 5 (1983) : 911.

⁵⁰ National Union of Eritrean Women, *Summary Report of the National Union of Eritrean Women*, presented by the Central Committee of the NUEWmn to the 3rd Congress of the NUEWmn, Eritrea, January 1988, 1.

⁵¹ Interview with former EPLF female cadre, HG, by Christine Mason, Asmara, Eritrea, 1998.

⁵² Interview with SG by Christine Mason, Elabored, Eritrea, December 1998. On sexual assault, see also Asma Abdel Halim, 'Attack with a Friendly Weapon,' in Meredith Turshen and Clotilde Twagiramariya, *op cit*, 1998, 85.

⁵³ C. Mason *Gender, Ethnicity and Nationalism in Eritrea*, *op cit*, 282-290.

⁵⁴ The issue is elaborated to a greater extent by Paula Schwartz in her examination of women's activism in the French Resistance. Paula Schwartz, 'Redefining Resistance: Women's Activism in Wartime France,' in *Behind the Lines: Gender and the Two World Wars*, eds. Margaret R Higonnet, Jane Jenson, Sonya Michel and Margaret C. Weitz (London: Yale University Press, 1987), 141.

⁵⁵ Michel Foucault, 'Afterword,' in *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics* (2nd ed.), eds. Hubert L. Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow

(Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983) 211,

⁵⁶ Michel Foucault, *History of Sexuality, Vol. 1: An Introduction* (New York: Random House, 1979), 96.

⁵⁷ Michel Foucault, 'Afterword,' in *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics* (2nd ed.), eds. Hubert L. Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), Michel Foucault, 'Afterword,' *op cit.*, 208.

⁵⁸ Jon Simons, *Foucault and the Political* (London: Routledge, 1995), 109; see also Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990).

⁵⁹ Colin Gordon, 'Afterword,' in *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972-1977*, ed. Colin Gordon (Brighton: Harvester Press, 1980), 257.

⁶⁰ Margaret Viki, interview in *Mothers of the Revolution*, ed. Irene Staunton (Harare: Baobab Books, 1990), 156. Lazreg also recognised the 'less spectacular, perhaps even tedious' nature of women's participation in the Algerian struggle for national liberation. Lazreg, *op.cit.*, 124.

⁶¹ Interview with Leila by Christine Mason, Keren, Eritrea, 1998. See C. Mason, *Gender, Ethnicity and Nationalism in Eritrea*, 217.

⁶² James C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts* (London: Yale University Press, 1990), 192.

⁶³ James C. Scott, *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (Dehli: Oxford University Press, 1990). Tensions exist between Foucault and Scott's analysis of power, see Roland Bleiker, *Popular Dissent, Human Agency and Global Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000). However, Bleiker argues that it is possible to understand domination and dissent by locating it on a terrain of struggle between Foucault and Scott. Such an interpretation of struggle gives some weight to human agency while recognising the potentially restraining impact of discourse.

⁶⁴ Peniston-Bird, *op.cit.*, 184.

⁶⁵ Ladewig, *op.cit.*, 244.