Resistance against Gender-Based Violence and Discrimination in the Poetry of Sindiwe Magona

Sindiwe Magona'nın Şiirlerinde Cinsiyete Dayalı Şiddet ve Ayrımcılığa Karşı Çıkış

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Abstract
Sindiwe Magona (1943- --) is a South African self-made black woman writer who rises out of difficult socio-economic conditions and turns out to be a well-accomplished writer who uses writing as a vehicle to struggle against the oppressive political system of apartheid, ongoing inner conflicts, criminality, and the infliction of gender-based violence. Gender-based violence remains an unresolved problem in South Africa where the apartheid regime and its adherents continue to nurture the patriarchal ideology which victimizes, alienates, and restricts women both in the domestic and public spheres. The focal point of this article, therefore, is to examine Sindiwe Magona's *Please Take Photographs* (2009) which is embedded with her subversive strategy of unsettling the masculine authority constructed officially over women and conducted as a natural determinant of men and women's unbalanced power relationship in South African society. An in-depth scrutiny of her poetry will reveal Magona's exceptional endeavor to extricate gender-based violence out of the domestic sphere and reconfigure it as the greatest social and political problem of her country.
Keywords: Sindiwe Magona, violence, gender, discrimination, apartheid

Introduction

Coming out of a tremendously oppressive, racist, and patriarchal social milieu of South Africa, Sindiwe Magona arises as a paragon of female perseverance with her astounding power to circumvent the inestimable impediments of her society and achieves to be a celebrated award-winning writer of South Africa who has prolifically produced novels, poems, plays, short stories, and autobiographies. Raised in poverty in a small town of "gang-infested Guguletu" in Western Cape, South Africa, Magona is later abandoned by her husband and has to work in a variety of jobs as a "domestic worker" (Gagiano, 2020, p. 677) and selling "sheep heads" (2020, p. 678) to feed her three children. In her analysis of Magona's multifarious victimization, Masemola states that living in Cape Town as a divorced mother and an "unemployed black person poses a special political challenge for her, necessitating a much broader approach to the understanding of, and inveighing against, the two logics of laws that regulate her life: gender, racism and capitalism" (2012, p. 119). In an interview conducted by Schatteman, Magona lucidly expounds her personal experience of multifold exploitation with these words: "I am a woman. I am black. And whether people discriminate against me because of my gender or my colour, it makes no difference to me. I'm still suffering from the discrimination, and I'm irritated by it" (Schatteman, 2008, p. 157). Women are always at the center of Magona's writings among which are autobiographical works, *To My Children's Children* (1990) and *Forced to Grow* (1992), novels, *Mother to Mother* (1998) and *Beauty's Gift* (2008), short story collections, *Living Loving and Lying Awake at Night* (1991) and *Push-Push* (1996), and many others. Magona's writing is riveting with the narratives of the difficulty of becoming a black woman in a notoriously partitioned country like South Africa where women are

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marginalized not only by the oppressive systems of apartheid and colonialism on racial grounds but also by their own patriarchal systems which give assent to women's subordination in their households and outside social domains. As a black woman who has been personally exposed to the circadian contact with the classificatory system of apartheid rule, legalizing racial, ethnic, and cultural discrimination as a government policy in South Africa, a country which is afflicted by political disorders, economic deterioration, and infraction of laws, Sindiwe Magona is one of the few black women writers who "transcended the apartheid state's conception of them as mere objects to succeed as published writers who created literary worlds and legacies" (Boswell, 2017, p. 415). Transcending the political, racial, and patriarchal hindrances of her social vicinity, Sindiwe Magona uses writing subversively as a political instrument of challenging patriarchal hegemonic ideologies which are purposefully orchestrated towards exploiting, oppressing, and silencing black women. As Guardicci vigorously observes, Magona implements "writing not only like a weapon against apartheid but also, sharply and up to date, against the patriarchal structure of South African autochthonous culture which oppressed black women almost as much and as viciously as racism did" (2015, p. 157). In this respect, *Please, Take Photographs*, which will be the predominant concern of this study, is Magona's first book of poetry published in 2009, in which the poet focuses on the victimized black women of South Africa who are most adversely affected by their country's centuries-old problematic history of violence, poverty, hunger, race and class divisions. A close reading of Magona's selected poems at the backdrop of South Africa's blood-spattered history of gender-based violence will unfold Magona's political activism in reacting against the hegemonic power structures trying to assimilate women into patriarchal authority.

Women's Subjugation under Apartheid and Post-Apartheid Periods in South Africa

South Africa is a unique country in terms of the extensiveness of its demographic segmentation according to the racial, ethnic, cultural, and sexual differences of its citizens. Demanding social and political circumstances of the country postulate enormous tribulations for black women whose inferiorization and broken self-esteems are overlaid primordially by the militarist and patriarchal ruling systems of the country from the beginning of colonization up to the present. South Africa is distinguished by Gouws as a country where there are "extremely high levels of gender-based violence such as rape and domestic violence, combined with one of the highest increase of HIV/AIDS infections in the world and varying levels of poverty among at least 40% of the population" (2005, p. 1). As one of the most profusely colonized, exploited, and manipulated countries in the world, South Africa has always grappled with internal political conflicts, race and class struggles, economic instabilities and social tensions. Since 1948, South Africa has been legally ruled by the National Party's racist policies known as "apartheid" which legitimately creates segregation in the country between the privileged white minorities called as Africaners and the majority of black African populations (Wesemüller, 2012, p. 11). Without finding time to recover from the cataclysmic injuries of imperialism and slavery, South Africans find themselves within another brutal governmental structure that is apartheid representing a system which validates the violation of human rights by categorizing individuals according to their races and cultures. In the same line with colonialism, apartheid is predicated upon the racist ideology of the superiority of whites over blacks. Pointing to its humanitarian circumferences, Herwitz clearly states that apartheid "was itself a crime against humanity, and this, one wants to say, doubles the stakes of gross human-rights violations committed on its side" (2003, p. 28). For black Africans, it is most certainly difficult to survive within a government-imposed system of

racial discrimination where blacks are deprived of their most rudimentary rights to benefit equally from social services since "public and private facilities were completely segregated; only whites could vote or serve in the town government; whites owned all the major economic assets" (Johnson, 1994, p. viii). The institutionally imposed racial discrimination stimulated the unjust distribution of wealth among people leaving the vast black majority in deep poverty, hunger, and unemployment while amplifying the financial prosperity of white population.

However, the situation was much more difficult for black women within this repressive system of apartheid where women "endured arrest, incarceration, or dispersal by the armed police" during their forced labor (Cottrell, 2005, p. 93). Apart from the problem of enforced labor, rape, abduction, and [c]hild sexual abuse" become abhorrent traumatic experiences for women while for men these are considered to be commonplace "peer-approved" actions (Bridger, 2021, p. 40). This tyrannical system of apartheid has also bestowed upon itself an absolute authority to decide on women's reproductive rights, declaring abortion as a criminal act that leads most women alternatively into "clandestine and often dangerous methods" to end their unwanted pregnancies (Klausen, 2015, p. 1). When these excruciating living conditions of apartheid are taken into consideration, it is not surprising for black South African women to undertake active roles in the nation's anti-apartheid political struggle. As Naidoo stresses, women "took on additional political roles to their personal ones, abandoning the societal expectation of motherhood and nurturing, or in spite of it" and undergoing tremendously unbearable tortures and punishments for the sake of becoming the voice of the unvoiced and marginalized women of their country (2022, p. 12). In their "first free and fair elections" South Africans, finally welcome the post-apartheid in 1994 with their first democratically elected president Nelson Mandela (Herwitz, 2003, p. xiii). The abolition of apartheid is responded with celebration by black populations who are deceived by the false promises of their governments about the probability of forging a "rainbow nation" under which racial and ethnic discrimination will certainly be replaced by multiculturalism with a guarantee of equal distribution of rights and opportunities for every citizen (Tafira, 2016, p. 305). Although the basic structure of apartheid is terminated, its ideological underpinnings, in a little while, are understood to be actively lurking at the background of their daily life. Johnson succinctly sums up the political instability in the ensuing years of apartheid in South Africa by saying that "there are crucial distinctions to be made between dismantling the institution of apartheid and altering the reality of dominance in South Africa. The dominant elite is seeking change in one, no change in the other" (1994, p. 179). This ostensibly drastic transformation of the country from the despotism of apartheid to the democracy of post-apartheid regrettably has failed to bring any kind of improvement in the socio-economic conditions of black people, not to mention women's position. The ascendency of one power structure is replaced by another one by safeguarding the strictly drawn class boundaries and racial stratification to the disappointment of black people who expect to find a rainbow government embracing racial, ethnic, and cultural differences as an embellishment of South Africa rather than as class determinants. In the case of women, the disappointment is unavoidably felt more strongly in tandem with their augmented victimhood inflicted by these constantly shifting hegemonic power structures. Sponsored by the new government as the harbinger of accountability for the mistakes made by the apartheid government, "Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC)" is founded as the most important project of President Mandela with an intention of making peace with the criminal and guilty past of South Africa by holding trials of human rights violations (Cottrell, 2005, p. 115). The pivotal role played by women in the termination of

apartheid is neglected by the commission which displays itself to be another governmental project of creating new authorial narratives to erase the old ones and strengthen its legitimacy. The pervasive aim of the commission is recognized to be, as Wilson suggests, the validation of "new hegemony" construed by the post-apartheid government to decide "whether to punish and / or pardon previous human rights violations" (2001, p. xvi). With its unsuccessful endeavor to scrutinize the crimes committed by the apartheid state against the South Africans, TRC instigates its own totalitarian discourse and maintains a new system of classification of crimes excluding those committed against women. The sexual abuse of women both during apartheid and liberation struggle is not perceived as serious crime as racist and political crimes, and most of the time, TRC has directed women to forgive their offenders and forget it. Apart from the scarcity of women who are willing to testify to TRC about their personal experience of sexual violence, women are forced officially by their government to carry alone the psychological burden of their sexual mortification. In Du Toit's words, "[m]en's biggest shame - their abuse of women - inverted cruelly into women's biggest shame, was finally left untouched by the reconciliatory efforts of the TRC (2005, p. 264). Further, Spencer convincingly argues, instead of offering wide-ranging and effective solutions to women's problems, TRC and post-apartheid government have a greater inclination to repress women's voices by confining them into "symbolic roles" and failing to notice their active contributions in shaping the future of South Africa, and thus, accelerating the process of post-apartheid (Spencer, 2021, p. 151). As a result, South African women recurrently find themselves in a continuing chain of centuries-old, petrifying governmental systems which oppress, marginalize, and trivialize women's matters. Their stories, narratives, and voices of resistance are constantly attempted to be constricted or distorted by the patriarchal government forces rendering women's struggle to be heard and seriously mattered as strenuous as possible.

Women in Sindiwe Magona's Poetry

Through the history of South Africa which is imprinted by racial divisions and sexual abuse of women, the long-standing heritage of the speechlessness of women against oppression is broken, though not frequently, by the activist women writers of South Africa among which Sindiwe Magona arises as one of the most sensitive writers towards black women's multifaceted experiences of poverty, racism, sexual harassment, rape, and domestic violence. Magona's writing provides an insightful exploration of the destitute status of women in South African society and "the making of female subjectivity under apartheid", one of the most dictatorial systems constructing a hegemonic power over its individuals (Dey Roy, 2021, p. 165). Managing to open a discursive path through the apartheid system which is specifically designed to forge unquestionable submissiveness in the majority of the society along with constructing an absolute control on female body and identity, Sindiwe Magona courageously defies the politically dictated role of female subjectivity and rejects to be subservient to the oppressive power structures by spearheading the resistance gender identity standing up against racism, gender discrimination and economic enslavement of her country. Magona disallows to "be silenced, and in her books speaks back to the imposed inferiority of black people in general, and black women in particular" (Segalo, 2020, p. 190). In that respect, "Motherhood" is a remarkable poem exemplifying Magona's outspoken views on the marginalized figure of womanhood and motherhood. Magona gives the definition of a mother in a socio-political context of South Africa, a country stricken by racial and gender inequality and social injustice.

Woman: Baby on back

Smile on her face
Why so intense, her gaze?

Woman: Baby on breast
Arms holding love
Why's fear gnawing at her heart?

Out in the yard; sun overhead,
Smiling little ones by her side
Busy shucking corn, all eager hands. (Magona, 2009, p. 14)

The poem sets forth an extensively broad definition of motherhood which requires, on the one hand, caring, feeding, and soothing her children, and on the other hand, working in the hardest jobs and maintaining the financial security of her family. The poem depicts women as the pillar of her house but exceedingly burdened by the heavy load of responsibilities demanded from her. The poem, thus, gives a brief sketch of the variety of roles undertaken by women in each part, and thus, elaborates on the strenuousness of life for South African women. In the first tercet, the woman is represented with her baby tied on her back and her thoughtfulness is reflected in the depth of her gaze. In the second part, the woman is portrayed again with her baby on her breast, nurturing and comporting the baby, yet her heart is overwhelmed with fear and distress while, in the third part, the woman is working in the corn fields under the heat of sun with her children working along with her. Women's terrible conditions of life are powerfully reflected in the poem's projection of motherhood which involves "cooking, washing," "[f[etching" and "mending" and working from morning till night without getting any rest while their minds are preoccupied with unsettled problems (Magona, 2009, p. 14).

After speculating on the fundamental role of women in sustaining her family in every possible means, Magona's poem shifts its attention from the outlining role of motherhood in the specific zone of family towards a broader circle to embrace whole South Africa. In a distorted, segregated, and exploited country, motherhood in Magona's poem represents the power of resilience, regeneration, and rebirth of a nation which has suffered for ages from slavery, colonialism, and dictatorships, and patriarchal systems. Motherhood, as Magona believes, is strong enough to ignite the "beginning" of a radical change in the society by putting an "end" to the centuries-old oppression of black South Africans (Magona, 2009, p. 14). Women, for Magona, are "Carrier of Africa's Seed; Nurturer of a / Continents Tomorrow, Center of its Very Survival" (Magona, 2009, p. 14). The unifying power of women in creating a counter-force of struggle against the domineering system of oppression in South Africa is emphasized by Magona in her poem which alludes to women as the only solution to liberate South Africa from its economic enslavement and political problems. Extricating women from the private and confined atmosphere of the family, Magona transfers women into a wider platform at the nucleus of the whole country and allocates critically important political identity to the definition of motherhood. With their all-encompassing, nurturing, and protective power to bring scattered members of family together, women are perceived to have the essential potential to unite the segregated races, classes and cultures in South Africa. Magona's poem underscores the agential function of women in steering the future of South Africa. Rather than marginalizing them as subservient, domestic creatures who embrace their secondary roles unquestioningly, Magona reconfigures an image of woman who can actively participate in decision-taking mechanisms for the political and economic amelioration of her country. In galvanizing the process of restructuring the nation after apartheid, as the poem advocates, the

conceptualization of motherhood denoting women's extraordinary capacity to keep the family together can be moved into the political sphere where women can contribute and strengthen the cause of black struggle by constructing resistance against the long-lasting racism under apartheid. Liberating women from the hegemonic domination of their husbands, Magona shows the possibility of using the imposed identity of motherhood in alternative ways, more vibrantly in creating a collective consciousness about the necessity of standing up against oppression not as a divided but as a unified nation. "In a society wracked by division and violence" Walter asks, "is it possible to speak of motherhood as providing a unifying - and emancipatory - political identity for women?" (1995, p. 418). Magona's poem offers a clarifying explanation to Walter's question about the emancipator power of the motherhood in solving South Africa's historical problem of injustice, violence, racial struggles and discrimination since women of South Africa know how to stand firm against tyranny. As the poem stoutly affirms, women of South Africa "[i]n calm and in storm – unbowed, /Tall she stands" and "[m]otherhood is her name" (Magona, 2009, p. 14). Hence, women are seen as the integral components in the anatomical as well as the political rebirth of South African society.

As a tenacious woman who has personal experience of discrimination due to her race, class, and gender, Magona elucidates the fundamental stimulants of writing the stories of South Africa' past and present in "Why I write" which is a poem revealing the particular purpose of writing for the women of South Africa. In an exceedingly plain poetic diction, Magona expresses her yearning for writing because she has actually lived those "tales of terror, of torture" and "[w]itnessed the savagery of man" (Magona, 2009, p. 60). As it is conspicuously manifested in these lines, in a country like South Africa where terror, torture, and violence are commonplace occurrences, Magona's writing is politically motivated to tackle with the crucial problems of country waiting to be solved. It is already difficult to be a woman in South Africa, but Magona's claim to be a black woman writer addressing directly to the political problems of her country is extremely challenging which requires fearlessness, endurance, and determination. Considering that writing and publishing industries are essentially patriarchal domains with a little opportunity given to women writers, for Magona, a self-educated and under-privileged citizen of South Africa, the activity of writing carries a higher value of importance, used as a political instrument of enabling the suppressed voices of women to be heard again:

> I write so that my children's
> Children will also hear from me
> So that the story of our past
> And the story of the pass
> Will be told also by those
> Who lived and carried that shame. (Magona, 2009, p. 60)

The poem conveys the exigency of narrating the dehumanizing experience of the apartheid years into the next generations of South Africans. And yet, what is more importantly needed is the transmission of these traumatic experiences through the mouths of people who have actually lived and "carried that shame" of racism and discrimination in their hearts not through the colonial discourse of the privileged whites who inflict and benefit from this repressive and patriarchal system of apartheid which is specifically designed to diminish black people into the status of inhumanity and cut down the voices of black women (Magona, 2009, p. 60). The shame and the feeling of inferiority inscribed by the colonial apartheid can only be erased through the act of writing that empowers Magona to salvage her lost self-esteem and dignity. Amina Mama vigorously argues that as African women, "writing offers us the chance to maintain our sense of who

we are, self respect intact, in the knowledge that we have challenged the paradigms bestowed upon us by histories and herstories that have not been of our own making" (2000, p. 20). To that end, black women's writing is "often therapeutic as well as political, subversive as well as transformative" (Mama, 2000, p. 20). Under the totalitarian political system of apartheid, which is predicated on creating absolute submissiveness from women, the evolution of women's subversive writing seems to be an inevitable process rendering women as active agents in the making of their stories. As the poet emphatically claims, her mission in writing is to "leave footprints" so that people will know that "This is who I am / Who I was" (Magona, 2009, p. 60). As these lines evidently reveal, writing, for Magona, becomes a means of affirming her distinctive black female identity, and inscribing her identity in the history of South Africa. Writing is the last thing that can be expected from black women who are estimated by the system as unthinking and obedient workers, mothers, and wives of South Africa. Contrarily, Magona's writing is itself an act of contesting the patriarchal system of apartheid by redrawing the contours of womanhood to include creative agency, activism, and resistance to oppression. In her inquiry of the specific aim of writing for black women, Boswell, similarly, writes that: "For black women in particular, writing was ideologically and structurally proscribed, as the apartheid imaginary sought to reduce black female subjectivity and personhood into the docile, instrumentalist machinery in service of the apartheid capitalist state" (2017, p. 414). While affirming their black female identity, writing also offers a therapeutic recuperation by providing an outlet for the tortured minds of apartheid's black female survivors along with enabling their stories to be transmitted into the future generations.

Subsequent to her steadfast declaration of the political and subversive temperament of her poetry in "Why I write", Magona, in "Victims of an undeclared war" shows an unwavering commitment to articulate multifarious victimization and the historical negation of women and womanhood in South African patriarchal society. In the opening lines of the poem, Magona refers to the perpetuated aggression in South Africa constituting an excessive threat to the survival of women and compares the daily life in South Africa into a "war-zone" where women are constantly intimidated, terrorized, and confronted by male atrocities (Magona, 2009, p. 31). The poem raises a significant cultural and social problem of South Africa that is grating experiences of abuse, sexual harassment, violence, and discrimination that women come across in their everyday lives:

> Embattled, daily, she rises
> To face yet another day
> Of uncertainty, fear, abuse
> At the hands of men
> Especially the men she loves. (Magona, 2009, p. 31)

What is clearly demonstrated in the poem is that democracy is needed in South Africa not only for the political and the economic stability of the country but also for the personal security of women who are constantly exposed to male brutality and deprived of their freedom. In a close investigation of women's exclusion from citizenship rights in South Africa, Meerkotter points out that: "Violence against women is rife, both inside and outside their homes… Essentially, the oppression faced by women hampers their social participation in all spheres of society" (2005, pp. 164-165). Magona's poem enables an access to wide-ranging and multi-dimensional form of violence inflicted by men which starts at family and elongates towards streets, social environs, and institutional organizations. South African black women, whose lives are regulated by the discriminatory political systems and traditional androcentric practices formulated by South Africa's religious, social, and cultural codes, are stricken by inequality and injustice

and relegated to the periphery of society. Under the patriarchal supremacy, women's identities and bodies are constructed, defined, and controlled by these misogynistic social mechanisms giving validation to the use, abuse, and distortion of female identity and body. Magona's poem, in fact, points to the overbearing social, cultural, and political structures in South Africa which tend to create vulnerabilities for women:

> Daily, she is raped
> Daily she is robbed
> Daily she is murdered
> Daily she suffers humiliation
> And abuse of one or another kind. (Magona, 2009, p. 31)

Magona draws a realistic portrayal of black women's exposure to the masculine violence which unravels itself in manifold forms such as rape, robbery, murder, and racial degradation. Regardless of their differences in form and content, the sexual, psychological racial, and labor exploitation of women are all intricately interrelated cases that are ideologically substantiated by patriarchal systems, socio-cultural dynamics, and oppressive political systems conjointly operating to commodify female flesh, subjugate women's minds, and objectify them by erasing their humanity. Disclosing these myriad forms of violence ordained, normalized, and systematized by the institutional mechanisms invested with the power and authority to captivate women within misogynistic conceptual frameworks, Magona displays the prerequisite of challenging the ideological sustainers prowling behind women's oppression. In the last part of the poem, Magona adroitly wonders how long the injustice against women will continue: "When will her freedom come? / Freedom to live free of fear?" (Magona, 2009, p. 31). The poem, in this manner, raises important questions about the emergency of establishing justice for women and men equally without excluding women as inferior to men, a mindset which prepares the legitimate ground for the perpetuation of violence against women and prevent them from partaking actively in social world. Accordingly, the questions asked in the poem about how long women should wait to "go about her business / Unhindered, unafraid?" are vitally imperative problems waiting to be worked out immediately (Magona, 2009, p. 31). Securing women's safety and well-being, preserving their human dignity in public and private domains are presented by Magona as essential elements to transform South Africa into an inhabitable place where women's sexual identity will not be the reason for their abuse, humiliation, and oppression. The poem lays bare the poet's disconcertment with the patriarchal hegemony which begins inside the family and extends upwards to the apex of the state operating actively for institutionalization of rape at almost every stage of the society and pre-programmed to safeguard the emasculated structures of power, domination, aggression over the feminized bodies of women who are codified as the weak, fragile, powerless, emotional, and irrational creatures.

The calamitous impacts of sexual violence in South African society is more arrestingly presented in "Imperfect Present" which forces its readers to ponder upon the tragic death of a young girl who is brutally murdered and buried. "This shallow grave you see / Perhaps dug by the victim herself" (Magona, 2009, p. 38). The poem visualizes a disquieting incidence of the abuse, torture, and the murder of a victimized girl who is forced to dig the earth with her own hands to be buried by the perpetrator. Magona reminds that: "This was somebody's child, lest we forget" (Magona, 2009, p. 38).

> In kinder climes, where rain came during
> The rainy season; and cold settled scores
> In winter; cleansed the land, rested the soil

> And blooms lay in wait for spring
> To awaken into gay and sprightly bloom
> And ripen in bounteousness in the autumn
> She would have lived to the summer of
> Her life and, having given fruit aplenty,
> Shed seed, reaffirming life.
> Instead, this sad bundle of bones you see
> Is all that remains of her; all she gives us (Magona, 2009, p. 38)

The poem directs a sharp criticism at the pervasiveness of violence in South Africa where women are reduced into a position of inhumanity, nothing more than a fetishistic sex object whose rape and murder, are, therefore, conceived to be justifiable by the masculine mindset giving credence to gender inequality on biological, socio-cultural, and political grounds. Magona draws a striking correlation between the young girl and nature in which there is always a hope, and expectation of the revival of life after the rainy season of winter. It is most assuredly known that nature will reproduce itself when the spring will "awaken into gay and sprightly bloom" (Magona, 2009, p. 38). In contrast to nature, this young girl's reproductive potency to revitalize South Africa is usurped by the men of her own country. The murdering of the young girl is implicitly identified in the poem with the unpredictability of the future of South Africa where the possibility of rebuilding of a nation is constantly obfuscated by South Africans themselves whose oppressive patriarchal power mechanisms give rise to the disproportional use of force on the vulnerable genders of women, girls, children and elders. To exemplify the degree of violence against women in South Africa, Du Toit writes that "It is not uncommon to hear of seventy-, eighty- and ninety-year-old women being raped, nor of infants and babies as young as a few months old being raped and sodomized" (2005, p. 254). Torture, rape, and murder are intersectional experiences of black women whose lives are wreaked with pain, terror, and fear occasioned by the constantly rejuvenated political systems of colonialism, apartheid, and post-apartheid rules which conjointly champion the sexual hierarchy of men. Bennett bespeaks her restlessness about the widespread public and political "deafness" to the gender-based violence in South Africa and argues that the voices of "African-based feminists and gender-activists" are "heard but, rarely included as voices essential to planning or implementing any project aimed at strengthening resistance to inequity, pain, deprivation, or powerlessness" (2001, p. 89). What is more appalling than the aggrandized level of gender-based violence is the inadequacy of constitutional enforcements and the ineffectiveness of legislative rules. The failure of South African governments in bringing entrenched solutions to the question of gender-based violence is explained by Du Toit with these words: "The government's response to rape, and the actual rape statistics also ensure that women lose faith in the government's sincerity in taking rape seriously and protecting women against its lethal threat" (2005, p. 254). Magona's poem, likewise, is a reminder of the fact that raping, beating, and murdering a woman is not simple private matter but a crucial political issue generating devastating consequences for the whole of the country. The abuse of women in South Africa demolishes the possibility of reconstructing peaceful prospect for South Africa where women will feel secure with their rights protected by the government and be respected by men. Disencumbering the problem of gender-based violence from the confines of the domestic sphere and moving into the broader arena of the whole country, Magona, in her poem, highlights that the small wound inflicted on the body of a nameless, unknown girl, in fact, breeds a massive wound on the national body of South Africa hindering its social, political, and economic recovery from racism and colonialism. Accordingly, sexual

violence is not only an impediment to the liberation of women but also to the national liberation of South Africa which remains as racially, culturally, economically, and sexually disintegrated and fragmented country.

Notwithstanding the fact that South Africa politically has been transformed from the repressive apartheid ruling system into the post-apartheid democratic state after 1994, the immediate repercussions of this conversion cannot be observed instantaneously on the social and cultural conventions of the society. The political and racial curtailment of women's needs, rights and interests during apartheid is superseded by another form of oppression during post-apartheid that is patriarchal violence imposed on black women by their own races. Magona deals with women's prolonged oppression that continues incessantly despite invariably changing political systems in her poem, "Brother, wait!" which reprimands black men of South Africa and compels them to stop violence against women. Magona draws attention to interconnectedness between women's struggle for liberation and South Africa's national struggle for liberation and prompts that "revolution is far from over" unless men change their perception of women (Magona, 2009, p. 70). There is another war that is imperative to be fought by men "[n]ot on the battlefield but in your / Home and in your community" (Magona, 2009, p. 70). The poem coherently endorses the view that a nation-wide revolution cannot be accomplished in a broad-spectrum of South Africa without, at first, defeating the patriarchal ideology which normalizes the superiority of men over women, and alarmingly, finds a solid ground in the majority of the society.

> The revolution is far from over;
> Rest not on your laurels,
> let not your Guard down.
> Our numbers are our Greatest strength.
> Killing a sister helps
> The other side (Magona, 2009, p. 70)

The necessity of bringing uniformity into the racially, politically, culturally, and sexually segregated South Africa is at the core of this poem which substantiates the view that the revolution in South Africa cannot be fulfilled comprehensively unless achieving the liberation of women from the constraints of domestic violence inflicted by men. The end of racial imperialism and apartheid regime has brought emancipation to the country in economic, legal, and social territories, yet, as the poem unveils, managing revolution in the minds of individuals by transfiguring their patrimonial habits perpetuated through traditions and moral codes is quite a challenging task which should be undertaken as sincerely as the military revolution of the country. Terminating masculine oppression of women is recorded to be the key component of attaining solidarity and communal unity which would bring the ubiquity of divided, polarized, and fragmented structure of South African society into a standstill. Prostrating the boundaries constructed by ideological configurations which authorize men to violate, exploit, and destroy women in every sphere of life is manifestly rested upon the notion of "love" which is promulgated in the poem as the most foundational cement of South African people who are tightly knotted together as one nation (Magona, 2009, p. 70). It is high time for South Africans to fight their battles not with their "guns" but with "love" because "this is the weapon black people / Everywhere must wield" (Magona, 2009, p. 70). Magona, through her poem, reinforces that violence against women is the most precarious handicap jeopardizing the future of South Africa where the minds and consciousness of women are still haunted by the trauma exerted by colonialism, slavery, racism, and apartheid periods. In an article, "It is

in the Blood", Magona comments on the perennial subsistence of trauma inherited from apartheid in the consciousness of South Africans and points out that:

> [T]rauma is in the blood for the people of South Africa; they can neither escape it nor ignore it. To do the latter would be well-nigh impossible except perhaps in those individuals who have escaped into a madness; and the former is just not possible, as trauma itself, its residue, or its outcomes form an integral, inescapable part of their very lives, of life itself – of all life in South Africa. Psychological trauma is one of the legacies of apartheid and has resulted in the social neurosis daily witnessed in the country – as evidenced by the screaming headlines: appalling violence and acts of unimaginable savagery. (Magona, 2012, pp. 93-94)

The psychological innateness of this trauma that Magona dwells upon her article is at first generated by racism and slavery imposed by the Western colonialist ideology but, it is pursued in the present, to a great extent, by the patriarchal supremacy of the black South African male populations who are aligned with the absolute power of rule over black female bodies. Even after the introduction of democracy into the country with post-apartheid, South African black women suffer from the emotional trauma produced by rape, murder, and physical violence implemented by their own partners, husbands, fathers, brothers or employers. Magona, in her poetry displays the improbability of envisaging a democratic future for South Africa as long as the physiological and psychological damage on black female bodies caused by the systematic gender violence is internalized ethically, politically, and culturally by the male of South Africa.

Conclusion

Commencing her writing career by giving personal accounts of her first-hand experiences of gender and race-based marginalization, discrimination, and oppression as a psychological coping strategy, Magona moves gradually towards producing more politically-oriented literature by using her writing as a powerful and efficient weapon to fight and resist against the hegemonic and systematic subordination of women by the patriarchy. In this regard, Magona in her book of poetry, *Please, Take Photographs*, has a wide array of targets, ranging from political leaders, corrupt and biased patriarchal values to husbands, fathers, and institutional organizations which construct, legitimize, and circulate dualistic gender roles within societies. Magona's poetry is infiltrated with the grueling experiences of black women who are striving helplessly to get over the crisis of the trauma emanating from the consistent shock of being killed, injured, raped, and discriminated under the commanding parasol of patriarchal ruling systems that eclipse women's wholesome dispensation from the captivation of patriarchal control mechanisms. Domestic and institutional violence, elevated rates of rape, sexual harassment, and insecure working conditions are among the wide-ranging issues that are problematized in Magona's poetry and evaluated as the greatest obstacles on South Africa's long and arduous pathway to emancipation. Political liberation of the country ensures the change of regime from apartheid towards democracy however, an all-inclusive liberation, as Magona advocates through her poetry, can only be possible by unfettering women from the internal apparatuses of the repressive patriarchal organizations which continue to operate for the justification of gender-based violence and the total subordination of women in the society. Creating political awareness about the necessity of burgeoning gender struggle resonates through Magona's poetry in which she dexterously tackles with the disastrous outcomes of the patriarchal predilections which culminate in standardization of violence against women in South Africa as routine

incidences of women's everyday life. The result is the bolstering of the prevailing discrepancies between the disadvantaged groups of black female members who are subjected to extreme forms of exclusion, racism, discrimination, and violation of rights and the prioritized groups of male members who entertain with social, political, and cultural privileges in their societies. Consequently, Magona claims for dignity, justice, and equality for the black women of South Africa whose centuries-old slavery and dehumanization process continue uninterruptedly in the present day under the patriarchal systems by changing its form and structure. Excluding women from social, economic, and cultural life helps nothing except dividing and dismantling of the country, therefore, Magona underscores the essentiality of building communal solidarity among South African citizens and strengthening their bonds of sisterhood and brotherhood instead of killing, murdering, and raping each other.

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