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Abstract: What happens when misogyny leads to increasing murders of women, whose lives are considered not worthy because their respectability is under attack? What do feminists do in a global moment when anti-feminist backlash emerge with fervor in politics, policy, and social spaces to reverse and challenge feminist progress? Rage happens. This article explores the role of rage in the development of African feminist digital counterpublics on Twitter. Through two Twitter hashtags, #MenAreTrash and #JusticeForSharon, I illuminate how anger emanating from increasing rates of femicide in Kenya and South Africa catalyzes the evolution of feminist communities of knowledge, solidarity, and resistance on Twitter. The rage illustrated in this article is considered in relation to longer histories of burnout and fatigue with nonresponse from the state and from male allies. Through these digital spaces, a process of building alliances and challenging anti-feminist movements emerges. Feminist engagements around these hashtags are a site of concrete resistance against online misogyny as well as its material manifestations through femicide. In a context where anti-feminist movements see digital spaces as sites to mobilize antifeminist sentiment, paying attention to digital feminist counterpublics is critical to understanding gender justice and freedom.

This article is catalyzed by gender politics across the globe that are mobilized by White nationalisms, far-right political formations, and ultranationalist politics bolstered by diverse forms of religious fundamentalisms. These larger politics have always coincided with the increased surveillance of bodies and a retreat to ideas about femininity and masculinity that are intent on redrawing gender binaries and retracing the primacy of heterosexuality and patriarchy. These include efforts by the Bolsanaro government in Brazil to declare feminism a dangerous ideology and shut down gender studies programs in universities, moves by the Trump administration in the United States to delete gender from all UN texts in a bid to exclude trans* individuals, and policies that limit American funding for abortion-related services, nationally and globally. The resurgence of "gender ideology" as a lexicon to reassert gender and sex as innately connected, and therefore to dismiss decades of feminist theorizing, undergirds these politics (Borger 2018). These state-led attacks on feminist movements, on activist and intellectual knowledge, form part of a broader constellation of nation-state-making projects that are reliant on disciplining gender broadly and gender-nonconforming people specifically.

It follows, therefore, that this political moment has generated counterhegemonic discourses and movements. In this article, I draw on the utility of rage as a site of resistance to examine how feminists in sections of the African continent have challenged conservative gender discourses and their physical manifestations on gendered bodies. I draw on Audre Lorde's premise that "Every woman has a well-stocked arsenal of anger potentially useful against those oppressions, personal and institutional, which brought that anger into being. Focused with precision it can become a powerful source of energy serving progress and change. And when I speak of change, I do not mean a simple switch of positions or a temporary lessening of tensions, nor the ability to smile or feel good. I am speaking of a basic and radical alteration in all those assumptions underlining our lives" (Lorde 1997, 280). Lorde's premise

provides the scaffolding for this article. The arguments that Lorde makes about anger, in a keynote address originally delivered in 1981, hold true for feminists today given the wave of far-right movements across the globe that mobilize heteropatriarchal and racialized tropes to police women's bodily autonomy. To be clear, this article explores the potential for social media to facilitate a broader discursive engagement with questions of gender violence, but activism to counter gender-based violence and femicide has always occurred through a range of offline community-organizing processes. More critically, Lorde's arguments have conceptual value in two main ways for this article. The first way is through the emphasis on the conversion of anger and rage into an energetic force to radically alter our lives. The examples I discuss illustrate how feminist mobilization, catalyzed by anger against the escalation of gender-based violence, alters the discursive space in relation to gender as well as approaches toward social-justice mobilization.

Second, Lorde's articulation of the codes that are used to silence and stigmatize Black women, which is rooted in a critical race analysis, is central to the analysis in this article. Gendered and racialized codes such as "angry Black woman" are designed to silence Black women and to disengage their interlocutors from the structural demands they make. In this way, responsibility is shifted from the beneficiaries of structural and systemic inequalities to those who are most affected by them. The trope of the angry, unhappy, unmarried, and therefore disaffected woman is an offshoot of the "angry Black woman" narrative. The core purpose of these descriptors is to pathologize and silence feminists who question the heteropatriarchal norms that rely on violence as a disciplinary force. The binary between "toxic feminists" and balanced gender activists articulated within anti-feminist discourses that I will explore in this article are reliant on heteropatriarchal ideas of the family and heterosexuality as an organizing force. The assertion within these discourses invokes anger articulated by feminists at femicide as generating "gender wars" suggesting that structural gender and class inequalities can be

resolved if allies and perpetrators are engaged with less anger. Anger therefore becomes constructed as an unproductive emotion that is detrimental to allyship and the possibilities for change that would emanate from it. Lorde's position reclaims anger and centers the possibilities that can emerge from affect.

Conceptually I draw on digital counterpublics as developed by Marc Lamont Hill (2018) to examine the communities and strategies emerging from feminist engagement. Hill views digital counterpublics as "any virtual, online, or otherwise digitally networked community in which members actively resist hegemonic power, contest majoritarian narratives, engage in critical dialogues, or negotiate oppositional identities" (2018, 287).

Methodology

Drawing on data from two Twitter hashtags, #MenAreTrash in South Africa and #JusticeForSharon in Kenya, this article illustrates how feminists from two African countries worked with social media to articulate and channel rage around escalating forms of violence against women. The rise of Twitter activism as a transnational site to mobilize against gender violence is not unique to Africa, as many other examples globally have illustrated, notably #MeToo, initiated by Tarana Burke in the United States, and #NiUnaMenos (Not One More) in Argentina, to name a few. The connections across these spheres of activism are not the focus of this article. Even in examining two African countries, this paper does not intend to compare them. Instead, I examine how activists have mobilized Twitter to address femicide, the gendered discourses that cut across national borders, and the role of digital counterpublics in framing rage as a radical force.

These two countries were not selected due to any contextual similarities. Rather, I consider the ways in which #MenAreTrash, which originally emerged as a response to high levels of sexual violence and other forms of gender violence in South Africa, became a

container for conversations on similar issues across Africa and in other parts of the globe. This is evident in the range of tweets I examined from different parts of the world that use this hashtag—excluding tweets that hijack the hashtag for unrelated conversations.

#JusticeforSharon intersects with the *#Menaretrash* hashtag as it illustrates how the gruesome murder of Sharon Otieno in Kenya in September 2018 catalyzed debates that reproduced and reasserted respectable femininities, with death suggested as a justified outcome for wayward women. It is at this intersection that these two case studies come together to illustrate how Twitter, as a vehicle for unfettered and unfiltered conversations, becomes a site within which multiple forms of rage collide.

I extracted 1296 tweets for #MenAreTrash over a period of ten days between February 11 - 21, 2019. It is important to note that this hashtag was set up to frame conversations on violence against women. Therefore, 80 percent of the tweets became part of the feminist digital counterpublic I refer to. Twenty percent of the tweets were by people who hijacked the hashtag to challenge and/or confirm assertions about patriarchy and toxic masculinity. Second, I culled 250 tweets for #JusticeforSharon over seven days from September 5 – 16, 2018. Of the 250 tweets, 40 percent represent people who see her murder as justified, as discuss below. I offer an analysis of the data generated from specific tweets, which have been anonymized. I draw on tweets generated by these hashtags to examine the production of gendered discourses, focusing on how morality and respectability emerge as tropes to justify the death of women. In doing so, I argue that violence functions as a disciplinary tool in relation to women and their sexuality. I put forth two major arguments and arrive at two conclusions. The first is that feminist digital counterpublics arise from rage as an effective site from which to build resistance, in this case transnational resistance. Feminist digital counterpublics resist hegemonic power (Hill 2018) by mobilizing against femicide and the discourses that justify it. Morality and respectability, virgins versus whores, are tropes that have been subject to feminist

analysis, unpacking how our societies produce women as gendered, racialized, and classed subjects (Alexander 1994; McClinctock 1995; Stoler 2002). Pat McFadden (2003) and Danai Mupotsa (2008) eloquently illustrate how sociocultural norms governing what is moral and therefore respectable set the terms on which women should enact their femininity.Failure to conform to "respectable femininity" results in death as an acceptable way to discipline women into morality and respectability. I analyze #TotalShutDownSA and#TotalShutDownKE and unpack how morality and respectability are mapped onto women's bodies as disciplinary tools to produce "good" women. I conclude that feminist digital counterpublics enraged by the violent logics of heteropatriarchy challenge these tropes by recalling and generating feminist analysis on gender and violence, thus building transnational feminist dialogue and communities. Enacted through feminist digital counterpublics, rage generates a transnational feminist intellectual community.

My second argument connects the use of morality and respectability as tropes against feminist digital counterpublics and the emergence of social movements as a strategy to counter discursive violence. Karen Lumsden and Heather Morgan (2017) note that social media platforms such as Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook are rife with gendered and symbolic violence targeted at women and minority groups. Gendered interactions on the internet are now predominantly framed by acts of aggression such as trolling, threats of hate crimes, Islamophobia, cyberbullying, revenge porn, and stalking, to name a few (Phillips 2015; Awan 2016). In refusing to be silenced, feminist movements have worked to make online spaces safer for women and gender-nonconforming people (Association for Progressive Communications). In claiming social media as a space from which to organize, I conclude that the emergence of transnational feminist digital counterpublics demonstrates digital action as a movement- and community-building action. Movement-building actions occur in two main ways: first by generating public debate and holding public attention on issues that are often assumed to belong

to one constituency, and second, by building a community of transnational actors who challenge normative constructions of femininities and masculinities while simultaneously pushing for state accountability. This conclusion echoes Sarah Jackson, Moya Bailey, and Brooke Foucault Welles (2020, 185) on the role of media technologies in maintaining the safe development of counterpublic identity and politics "by reintroducing and reframing issues for the public that have been either misrepresented or ignored in the mainstream public sphere."

Situating Kenya and South Africa

The names and stories I share to situate feminist digital counterpublics against femicide in South Africa and Kenya have been purposefully selected to illustrate how patriarchy functions to dismember women to sustain itself. I catalogue these deaths to draw attention to the fact that as horrific as they sound to a reader, they pale in comparison to the names we do not know. Rather than retreat to statistics, I choose to remember those whose stories captured public attention. In naming, we see these women. We re-member them since some were dis-membered. As this article will illustrate, the death of women is easily explained away, erased, forgotten unless they are deemed to matter. Determining who matters is often an exercise of privilege based on class, race, or gender. Are you worth mourning or remembering? (Mbembe 2003). We begin to understand the rage that has shaped the mobilization discussed in this article by bearing witness to the horror.

On February 2, 2013, 17-year-old Anene Booysen was found alive, disembowelled, at a construction site in Bredasdorp in the Western Cape, South Africa. She had been gang raped. Anene died later in the day, but before her death she identified one of her attackers. Twenty-two-year-old Johannes Kana was charged with her rape and death and sentenced to life imprisonment. On the other end of the spectrum are hate crimes based on sexual orientation (*News24* 2013). The 2000 Equality Act outlaws hate crimes, which in theory include crimes

based on sexual orientation. However, while South Africa's National Prosecuting Authority recognizes that hate crimes of a sexual nature are rife, the South African government has not prioritised it as a specific area of intervention, which some scholars argue is due to the difficulty in prosecuting hate crimes (See Naidoo & Karels, 2016). The brutal 2007 deaths of Sizakele Sigasa and Salome Massooa in Meadowlands, Johannesburg, and Eudy Simelane's murder in 2008, in Gauteng, are illustrative of targeted crimes against Black lesbian women, which while addressed in the justice system, were not considered hate crimes (Hames 2011; Anguita 2012).

When they hit the headlines, these murders and violent sexual attacks do so for two major reasons. The first is the gruesome nature of the attacks, as was seen in the case of Anene Booysen. Parallels can be drawn between the response to Anene's murder and to the Nirbhaya case in India (Parashar 2013). The second has been has been activist-led outrage demanding government accountability, which is often directed toward the justice system. The murder of Black lesbians that I highlight above falls in this category and coincides with coordinated political organizing around violence against Black queer women that develops outside of mainstream gender-based-violence work. The work of organisations such as the Forum for the Empowerment of Women (FEW) and People Opposing Women Abuse (POWA) are instructive examples of queer specific organising against Black lesbian murders. The dual objective of strengthening community and claiming rights and accountability is seen in campaigns of this nature.

I turn to Gqola (2015) to understand the logics that shape these forms of violence. Gqola's *Rape: A South African Nightmare* (2015) offers a robust analysis of the factors that contribute to an understanding of the rape and murder of women and gender-nonconforming people in South Africa. There is an apparent contradiction between the violence that appears to undergird South African society and a robust constitution that enshrines the protection of

rights and freedoms. Gqola (2015) argues that fear, silence, and discipline frame discussions and experiences of sexual violence. Gqola (2015) notes how prevailing social norms normalize or trivialize sexual assault, thereby seeing violence as rooted in a delinquent or deviant man rather than an interrogation of how gender itself operates as systemic, and invested, ontological brutality. The public media discourses produce a binary between the horror of rape enacted on the "innocent" in contrast to that which occurs to the "less innocent": grown women, older girls, lesbians, transgender people (Gqola 2015). It is this binary that explains the nationwide empathy toward Anene Booysen.

The prevalence of violent sexual crimes against young girls and women in South Africa has led to studies that seek to draw a correlation between the traumatic violent history of apartheid and current manifestations of heteropatriarchy (Ratele 2013; van Niekerk 2019). Kopano Ratele (2008), for instance, argues that class, age, and race shape male experiences of masculinity that in turn lead to violence against women. His work focuses on men with limited economic opportunities and accounts for some of the cases explored in this article, where the socioeconomic status of the men is much higher than that of women. Put together, this scholarship offers a structural understanding of the failures of the state to deal decisively with femicide and hate crimes. These failures play out in the contradiction between strong constitutional provisions and legislation and waning government investments in structures that support victims and survivors of violence. (See Bennett, Maharaj, and Ncanywa 2008; Heinrich Boll 2019)

While Kenya's political and economic history differs significantly from that of South Africa, the logics of violence remain the same. On October 7, 2013, the *Daily Nation* carried a report by Njeri Rugene about the gang rape of a young girl in Busia County by three men, who were subsequently released by the police with an order to slash grass. Njeri Rugene's report came over a month after an uproar over Nairobi Governor Evans Kidero publicly assaulting a

woman member of parliament, Rachel Shebesh, on September 6, 2013. Those pushing for accountability were countered by a false class analysis suggesting that it was middle class women defending one of their own. I was among the activists who actively campaigned for Kidero's removal from office. In the noise that emerged in support of Kidero's violence, what was masked were the decades of work that have gone toward dismantling the normalization of violence against women. These are two of many cases. Others include Phyllis Nyaguthie's rape at Kenyatta Hospital, the unnamed woman who was forced to deliver on a hospital floor in Busia due to incompetent nurses, the burning of "witches" in Kisii, and the unnamed victims of sexual violence during the postelection crisis (Ssegawa and Munene 2013; Okech 2013; Abuga 2017). The resistance to women claiming their place in the Kenyan society continued with a Supreme Court ruling on the two-thirds constitutional gender provision, which seeks to ensure that public office—elective and appointive—is not dominated by men. The ruling argued that the provision was intended to be progressively achieved rather than rendering existing offices unconstitutional, thereby pointing to the limits of legal provisions, however progressive, in advancing freedom for women. These and other cases point to the retrenchment of women's status as second-class citizens, despite public policies that appear to place women's advancement front and center. Second-class citizenship is evident in the control of women's bodies, in efforts to discipline women who transgress "acceptable" performances of womanhood, and in glaring efforts to define women's political participation within specific parameters.

Acts of violence against women are not about a justice system gone awry or impunity by the political class. Instead, they are symptomatic of a society whose intolerance for women's voices, space, and visibility is increasing. When systemic violence is reconstructed as isolated criminal acts and not as part of a broader conversation about patriarchy reconstituting itself, it does not allow us to examine the systems that motivate and support how aggressors exercise

power (Okech 2017). What these cases illustrate, as Lorde (1997) argues, is that there has been little or no radical alteration of the conditions of oppression that women encounter. The policy changes, while critical and important steps, are met with patriarchal resistance to transformation. Empirically, the experiences of online threats and physical violence remain real for women, mediated only in part by the race and class positioning of different women.

These attacks on women do not occur in a vacuum. The increasing criminalization, killing, and disappearance of young men on the edges of big cities in Kenya, with limited state accountability, informs the belief that some lives are disposable. The ease with which some violence is deemed justifiable pervades public debate in Kenya, illustrating how deeply securitization discourses, which justify the monopoly of violence, are embedded. Taken together, South Africa and Kenya point to the similarity in the structures that underpin violence against women generally and femicide specifically. That these structures are sustained by legal institutions and frameworks and societal attitudes that sanction violence as a tool for "managing" women and girls in society. These dynamics are at the center of the social media debates that I use as a scaffolding for this article.

"Slay queens" and erotic power

Sharon Otieno

> In September 2018, the mutilated body of a pregnant woman was found in a forest in South Nyanza, Kenya. The body was later identified as belonging to twenty-six year old Sharon Otieno, a second-year Medical Records and Information student at Rongo University. She was seven months pregnant. She was stabbed three times in the neck, four times in the back and once in the left side of the abdomen piercing her seven-month foetus. Sharon, it was revealed was dating the governor of the county where her body was found. The governor Okoth Obado was the father of the child she was carrying.

> Before her death, she met a journalist from the Daily Nation at a local hotel to share her story. Okoth Obado had allegedly stopped communicating with her after she found out she was pregnant. It was during this meeting that she was abducted along with the journalist by known associates of the governor. While the journalist managed to escape from a moving car her fate was slightly different. (*Standard* 2018)

Sharon's death sparked outrage on social media and was a leading story in the mainstream media for two weeks. Her death was one of an increasing number of cases where young women were killed by lovers, husbands, and estranged boyfriends (KNBS 2017; Ombako 2019). In 2019, there were twenty-two reported cases of women killed in different parts of the country, and these were cases that made the news (Ombako 2019). The fact that Sharon's death was associated with a political figure increased interest in the case, given the lack of faith in the judicial system to hold politicians and their allies accountable for any crimes. I use Sharon's case to frame the systemic issues that emerged as part of the rage expressed around her death. The discussions around her death sparked hegemonic and majoritarian narratives around gender, which form an important background for the critical debates that feminists have mobilized using social media.

The social media debate that followed Sharon's murder resulted in a neat divide between those who believed that her murderers and their accomplices should be brought to justice and those who felt that Sharon's death was warranted. In effect, as the tweets below illustrate, "good-time girls" like Sharon were believed to be dangerous, and her death was seen as producing moral lessons for younger women, especially those in universities (Ligaga 2014, 249). In this section, I focus on the rage from men who argue for the need to hold "immoral" women responsible for the choices they make. These tweets illustrate the sentiments of men negotiating the reality of agentic women who are challenging dominant forms of masculinity.

It is the question of power between women and men, rather than the power dynamics between rich, older men and poorer, younger men that is contested.

Two terms gain currency as discursive tropes to frame this rage. The first is slay queen, a term that has its roots in queer communities and is intended as a term of affirmation: slay, queen. In Kenya, the tern has been usurped to refer to women who cannot account for the wealth or flamboyance shown in their lives. The fact that these women are often visible on social media platforms such as Facebook or Instagram makes their lives more open to scrutiny. Social media visibility and its role in exhibiting lifestyles leads to the assumption that their wealth is not connected to gainful employment or associated with "moral relationships" such as those with their husbands or fathers. Tightly linked to slay queens are sponsors, in other contexts referred to as blessers. Sponsors are often older men who finance the lifestyles of slay queens. Central to these relationships is the dynamic between power, money, sex, and sexuality. There is a clear understanding that money is exchanged for sex and that the relationship is transactional in nature.

The discourses generated around slay queens and sponsors rely on two major disciplinary tropes geared towards constraining and punishing women's sexualities.

> stop diverting attention...nobody is for the murder but the question is could the murder be prevented if the lady had morals? Can the other ladies obsessed with sponsors and politicians learn from it?

> but sponsor manenos [issues] is not something new ... she knew what she was getting into...her greed for money killed her

> Governor Obado Supporters Protest saying Sharon was a PROSTITUTE Who Should not be Mourned #SharonOtienoProsecution #ObadoCharged #ObadoInCourt
>
> There's nothing like #JusticeForSharon these are the results of dating sponsors ... she tried to blackmail him. Shoutout to the ladies who are hustling with their legs closed. You all won't die like Sharon Otieno.
>
> Let's condemn the heinous murder, but still call out the essence of upholding morality. Time to address this silly "Sponsor" culture among our young ladies. May Sharon rest in peace.

The first of these tropes, as illustrated by the tweets above, concerns morality. They position Sharon, not the murderers, with their brutal and criminal actions, as the problem. The danger associated with her "immorality" is connected to her body and the ownership of her sexuality. The danger that arises from murder does not feature in this discursive trope. The development of the morality/danger nexus relies on the assertion that slay queens should know the "rules" that come with taking on a sponsor. Violence and death, as punishment for "immoral women" are seen as justifiable. This trope is reliant on what scholars have pointed out as the cultural meanings and material concerns mapped onto women's bodies and sexuality (Jackson and Scott 1996, 26). Mary Douglas (2002, 142) notes that the body is a complex structure on which power and danger are reproduced (2002, 156). Significant to this reproduction of power and danger is the ordering of social life, with sex pollution flourishing in contexts where male privilege is taken as given (Douglas 2002, 176).

In Kenya, these ideas have historicity. Historian Lyn Thomas (2005, 175) argues that the politics of the womb , which refers to the public contestations and therefore control of

women's bodily autonomy through the management of reproduction. Thomas (2005) notes that the control of women's sexual and bodily autonomy has been crucial to ensuring material prosperity and constructing moral people and communities (6). Mupotsa (2008, 99) maintains that the success or failure of the project of "national culture" in Zimbabwe appears to be placed on the national family, or the state's ability to manage and control the mobility and sexuality of women's bodies. The conflation of "respectable" femininity with social and biological mothering or motherhood has been central to the constitution of the Zimbabwean nation, challenging the notion of the nation as a stable and closed entity (Mupotsa 2008, 11). Consequently, the instability generated by deviations from the disciplinary forces of gendered norms is associated with penalties. These penalties are not only about how those in authority act but also how the public discursively and practically defines "moral behavior." In Sharon's case, the choice to date an older man who gave financial gifts is believed to be at the core of the problem. The second discursive trope comprises a challenge to women's agency and erotic power, linked to hegemonic masculinities and the resuscitation of the state as heterosexual.

> Even as we push for #JusticeForSharon, we must remind our sisters that there is no benefit of dating and sleeping around with your grandfather's for money. Date your agemates and build your empire together.
>
> As we shout #JusticeForSharon I also caution female juveniles to adjourn these socialite stunt on Kenya Legislatures in the name of being treated well, sponsored -
>
> I lost my girl to a sponsor while I was in campus 5 years ago, it was really painful. #JusticeForSharonOtieno

A lesson to your fellow young women... Trashing young visionary men over older men. #JusticeForSharonOtieno

"Let's demand justice for Sharon Otieno because nothing can justify murder; but it is also time we condemn this culture of ladies in campus dating their fathers, grandfathers and their ancestors, it doesn't and it won't end up well my sisters"

DESPISE THE FREE LUNCH

what is offered for free is dangerous - it usually involves either a trick or a hidden obligation let justice and lessons be obtained RIP Sharon #JusticeForSharon

The tweets above are illustrative of perspectives that do not view the men who murdered Sharon as culpable for her death. Dating and marrying older men as a third, fourth, or fifth wife is not seen as problematic; it is defended as cultural and an acceptance of "African masculinities," which is the notion that men cannot be with only one woman. This is affirmed in the Marriage Act of 2014, which allows men to have more than one wife (Government of Kenya 2014). Having a man provide for a woman is acceptable because it serves as evidence of real masculinity, a man as provider and head of the household. However, the provision of financial resources is contingent on women providing and fulfilling certain roles – conjugal rights and reproduction. If a woman fails to fulfil these responsibilities, the contract will be terminated, even if violently.

Hegemonic masculinities assert the right of men to do as they wish while women are urged to exercise caution. Ratele (2008, 518), who writes about the relationship between powerless males in relation to other males, notes the importance of age, income, occupation, and other psychosocial experiences as critical to understanding violent reactions against

women's independence and feminism. The argument that Ratele makes above offers a frame to understand the relative silence of men on the actions of other men in relation to Sharon's murder, retreating instead to pejorative narratives about "immoral women who chase after grandfathers."At the center of the male complaints are the way socioeconomic class and age come together to disadvantage young men who feel entitled to relationships with their women peers. The focus on young women as the problem in these intergenerational heterosexual and transactional relationships is the subversion of the terms on which they are conducted. The decision by women to subvert heterosexual intergenerational relationships that have always been constructed through the prism of polygamy gives men the avenue to frame themselves as victims, with older men as acting within the realm of acceptable hegemonic masculinity and young women as making immoral and dangerous choices with well-known repercussions. That greed, brought about by a penchant for "free lunches," bears repercussions, including death, is indicative of this narrative.

It is important to highlight hegemonic masculinities because when women are in similar situations, the same arguments do not hold. A notable corollary is the case of Wambui Otieno and Peter Mbugua. Wambui Otieno is a well-known Kenyan Mau Mau freedom fighter (Otieno 1998). In 2003, Wambui Otieno (67) married stonemason Peter Mbugua (25), who was forty-two years her junior. Through the act of marriage to a younger man, Wambui was transformed into an immoral woman. The respectability associated with Wambui as a widow who was imagined to be sexually inactive and companionless for over thirty years was reversed with one action – her mobilization of the institution of marriage as a site that is argued to frame respectable sexual relations. Unlike in the case of Sharon and Obado, where a relationship occurred outside the sanctified institution of marriage, Wambui Otieno, by choosing to marry Peter Mbugua, was constructed as the villain. Wambui Otieno was variously painted as uncouth and embroiled in a complex yet unexplained plot to ruin the future of the young, less affluent

man (Musila 2005). Wambui Otieno, like Sharon, was considered a wayward woman associated with nonhegemonic femininities. Thus, expressions of sexuality that do not cohere to "respectable" femininity are surveilled, constrained, and demonized because they undermine the social organization of male power.

Discursive voices need to be understood as anti-feminist movements that emerge to challenge the relative success of feminist labor in shifting the understanding, articulation, and embodiment of gender. Anti-feminist movements emerge when existing social movements demonstrate potential and/or actual success in their efforts to elevate public debate on issues and to shift policy, practices, and political alignments. Those who defend the existing heteropatriarchal order mobilize to protect the systems that uphold their position of privilege. Cumulatively, anti-feminist views that justify the death of wayward women emerge to challenge women who refuse to conform, moving the conversation away from isolated and outlier voices to a collective brought together by shared views and not by an organizing structure. The role of these anti-feminist movements is to eliminate social movement activists or reverse policy and cultural gains associated with feminist movements (Fadaee 2014).

Feminist rage emerges discursively and evolves into a space for direct action, enlarging virtual and offline feminist communities. Drawing people together across borders, the hashtags I examine below not only about speak back to the anti-feminist movements I describe above, they also speak to each other and build community. In this context, what these hashtags and the communities generated from them translate to is the use of anger to radically alter the assumptions underlining our lives (Lorde 1997, 280). Anger becomes a generative force for transformation and action rather than serving only as a reaction against detractors. As the section below illustrates, the transformative potential of this anger lies not only in pursuing state accountability but in strengthening feminist communities.

Challenging the man in the state: #MenAreTrash and #TotalShutDown

> In April 2017, the charred remains of twenty-two year old Karabo Mokoena were found by a passerby in an open field in Johannesburg.Karabo went missing on April 28th 2020. Sandile Mantsoe a married father of three who was reportedly in a romantic relationship with Mokoena since October 2016 was charged with the premeditated murder and found guilty in May 2018 (see Chabalala 2018; Mafokwane 2018)

Karabo's gruesome murder, like Sharon's in Kenya, reignited public conversations on the extent of gender-based violence in South Africa. Some 250 out of every 100,000 women are victims of sexual offences in South Africa (Statistics South Africa 2018). It is important to read this number in relation to the context set out at the beginning of this article. Poor reporting and weak justice systems play a role in what is published as representative statistics. Context shapes statistics. Karabo's murder is part of growing statistics on the status of women in South Africa. This was evident in the #MenAreTrash hashtag that initially began with a few women speaking about their experiences of violence at the hands of men (Samanga 2017). The hashtag subsequently gained considerable ground, transforming into an online movement that shed light on the abuse, femicide, and rape that are rampant in South Africa and often go unreported. The hashtag became a space to expand societal consciousness about femicide and misogyny and to express rage. Acting as a counterhegemonic strategy, #MenAreTrash transformed the discursive space of social media through the insistence on using a provocative hashtag that does not leave anyone who encounters it indifferent.

Most of the people who use the hashtag for its intended purpose, which is to illustrate the manifestations of structural heteropatriarchy and therefore misogyny, have been on the receiving end of two distinct responses. The first category of responses comprises men who

view the hashtag as an instigation of gender wars by toxic and angry feminists who must be disciplined. The second category are the #NotAllMen category. These responses reduce the hashtag to a discussion about individual men who are wonderful and therefore cannot be subsumed under the #MenAreTrash hashtag, as seen in the tweet below. It also implicitly challenges rage as unhelpful in building solidarity and advancing a useful conversation.

> #MenAreTrash has become more of a rallying cry than a conversation starter. Most men are not provoked to think deeply when insulted. In fact, most PEOPLE do not do well with harsh criticism. So these conversations end up being feminists preaching to the choir
>
> Not to say I do not think this movement had good intentions. I just think men and women do not know how to relate to each other anymore. There is no vulnerability, no trust, no openness, no honesty. And #MenAreTrash is just a symptom of the disease, not the cure

The #NotAllMen response parallels the #AllLivesMatter response to #BlackLivesMatter, which ignores the racialized logics that underpin structural inequalities. In this case, #NotAllMen sidesteps the patriarchal logic that sustains misogyny and femicide. Implicit in #MenAreTrash is the complicity of "good men" who refuse to hold other men responsible for misogyny and its symptoms such as femicide, rape, and other forms of sexual violence. In this section, I focus on tweets that exemplify feminist articulations of the structural roots of femicide and violence against women generally, and the ways in which feminist digital counterpublics emerge, contesting majoritarian narratives and engaging in critical dialogues.

I can love black men and STILL scream #MENARETRASH confidently

Men can calmly stroll along the road in the evening. You a woman? Not so much. You panic because you could get robbed, raped, murdered. It should not be this way. #MenAreTrash

I mean real responsibility. Which includes stepping in to further the discourse around systemic abuse of power by men. Simply ignoring women who use #MenAreTrash to disguys [disguise] their misandry is ridiculous and irresponsible at best

#MenAreTrash and the number of Black men out here making excuses for the rapist are even trashier. You literally rape a woman in a club while being recorded go on with your life, this is the level of patriarchy misogynoir we exist in. Fuck.

Which is why #menaretrash and buzzwords like toxic masculinity have become so prominent cuz it is about challenging the male role in maintaining these gender roles. But fragile men ain't trying to hear it.

Treat ALL MEN you do not know like THEY'RE trash unless a girl you know can vouch for him. Yeah It is cynical, but f*ck this. #menaretrash

All those good men just standing around, watching that man beat up two women. #menaretrash

> MEN WHO ARE NOT TRASH UNDERSTAND THAT THE MOVEMENT #MENARETRASH DOESN'T APPLY TO THEM. If you did not MOLEST, RAPE, CATCALL OR MURDER A CHILD OR A WOMAN THEN THIS MOVEMENT DOES NOT APPLY TO YOU. The fact that you are masculinity broke because of this movement means you are one.
>
> #menaretrash refers to the fact that there are waaaaaay too many messed up things that men do and get away with it because of our patriarchal society. So yeah... men we need to make a special effort to not be trash
>
> Good men will say #menaretrash as a matter of fact and not look for any points for it. Good men challenge systemic abuse. Good men challenge the men close to them on misogynistic behaviour. They do not ask to be treated differently. They ARE different and behave accordingly.

The tweets above illustrate Twitter users who actively contest dominant antifeminist narratives and reject respectability politics, dismissing the assertion that the universalizing approach to #MenAreTrash subsumes "good men." These tweets push back against male fragility and the desire to claim "points" for acting humanely rather than rejecting violence as the operating principle for "disciplining" women. Rather, they demand that "good men" actively work to counter patriarchy without seeking praise for it.

#MenareTrash was accompanied by an online and offline response in #TotalShutdownSA. It translated the online rage catalyzed by Karabo's murder into collective countrywide action demanding greater state accountability for crimes against women and girls. In South Africa #TotalShutdownSA was organized around a call for all women to shut down

the country at the start of Women's Month—August 2018. The protests occurred simultaneously across South Africa with the tagline “my body not your crime scene.” Using social media as a mobilization point, the marches were framed as intersectional, with the key intention being the withdrawal of women’s labor, bringing economic activities to a halt. The choice of an economic boycott as a strategy emerged from exhaustion with nonaction by the state on violence against women and gender-nonconforming people. However, organizers recognized that this option may not be available to all and offered that, “Women who are not able to march, we are asking that they stay away from work on that day, a total stay away. For those who absolutely must be at work, we are calling for a moment of solidarity from 1-1.30pm. In addition, refrain from all economic activities—do not buy anything on that day unless absolutely necessary” (Howa 2018). The march received its fair share of critique as an activity that was removed from the realities of poor Back women and anchored in neoliberal middle-class women’s concerns (Reddy 2018). What is notable nonetheless is that in Pretoria alone, the nation’s administrative capital, approximately two thousand protesters marched to the Union Buildings, which house the president, to present a memorandum with twenty-four demands to President Cyril Ramaphosa (The Total Shutdown 2018). While the protestors did not shut down the economy, they succeeded in sending a clear message about their anger at the escalating levels of gender-based violence in South Africa. It was this rage that forced the president to meet the protestors to receive the memorandum personally.

This relative success in South Africa catalyzed efforts that led to the replication of similar marches in Kenya. On March 8, 2019, International Womxn’s Day, a series of protests against femicide in Kenya were organized under the hashtag #TotalShutdownKE. The goal of these protests was to make a public statement about the escalating number of violent deaths of women with limited legal redress. Nine demands were articulated in the memorandum addressed to the head of state and the women representatives in the Kenyan parliament (Feminist

Collective 2019). Unlike South Africa, the memorandum did not receive much traction with the political class, but it mobilized an online conversation that moved the murder of young women from isolated instances of criminality into a larger conversation about femicide, with misogyny and heteropatriarchy as its anchors.

By way of conclusion: #AmINext?

> On August 31st 2019 a forty-two-year-old man was arrested in connection to the murder of a missing 19 year old University of Cape Town student. Uyinene Mrwetyana had been missing for nine days. Uyinene Mrwetyana had gone to a local post office to collect a parcel. She was asked to return because of a power outage. When she did, she was accosted by the post office worker, raped and killed. (Cruywagen 2019)

The disappearance and death of Nene, as she was known by those close to her, revitalized the question of the disappearances, rape, and murder of young Black women across South Africa. The hashtag #AmINext emerged as an articulation of the anxiety and anger about the number of young Black women who go missing and turn up dead, if found. As a connector across physical divides, social media facilitates a space to collectively grieve and mobilize against these acts of misogyny. Feminist rage and the development of counterpublics against femicide are a powerful political strategy connecting feminist struggles transnationally in Africa. Through mourning, grief, and rage, feminist digital counterpublics challenge efforts to circumscribe responses to femicide as evidence of toxic and angry feminists. A virtual resistance community reinvigorated by anti-feminist movements such as #MenAreTrash contests the notion that the only way to be heard is to be polite. Lorde notes that the insistence

on “being polite” is a tactic of the powerful arguing that it is not the delivery that is the issue but the message that causes discomfort to the privileged. (Lorde 1997, 278).

Feminist digital counterpublics build community, drawing together activists who may not be affiliated with formal organizations into collective action against femicide. These collective actions challenge arguments around the fleeting nature of hashtags, their sustainability, and their connection to the material realities of the majority. As I have argued in this paper, online violence mirrors offline violence, and increasingly, feminist digital counterpublics operate in a global sphere where anti-feminist movements are consolidating influence (Corredor 2019). Through these hashtags, feminists are building movements in the face of increasingly hostile environments for women and gender-nonconforming people. Movements are built when feminists claim spaces that use violence to discipline women and gender-nonconforming people into the “private” domain. These are agentic actors challenging patriarchal power. Feminist digital counterpublics repurpose social media for political change while simultaneously developing counterpublic identities and politics, in this case by recentering femicide, sustaining energy for government accountability, and influencing political actors to act, as illustrated in both Kenya and South Africa. Finally, feminist digital counterpublics are movement-building communities that connect historical feminist knowledge and strategies to the discourses produced by these hashtags, thus creating space for new political, public action.

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