

# **OUR BODIES, OUR TERRAIN: SITUATING RAPE IN DECOLONIAL FEMINIST FRAMES FROM THE GLOBAL SOUTH**

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## **Abstract:**

A groundbreaking interdisciplinary volume that re-positions rape as not merely an individual act of sexual violence but a structural practice embedded in systems of power, coloniality, and patriarchy. Through eleven empirically rich and theoretically innovative chapters spanning nine countries in Africa and South Asia, the edited volume examines how sexual violence persists despite decades of legal reform and feminist activism, and why certain victims elicit public outrage while others are rendered invisible or “unrapeable.” Drawing on feminist, decolonial, and intersectional frameworks, the book explores the politics of silence, the complicity of law and the state, and the multiple forms of feminist resistance that emerge from the Global South.

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### **Introduction**

*Haunted by Silence: Decolonial Feminist Reckonings with Rape in the Global South.*  
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### **Part I: Silenced by Design: Consent, Control, and the Erasure of Women’s Voices**

This section, *Silenced by Design: Consent, Control, and the Erasure of Women’s Voices*, brings together three chapters that interrogate the institutional, legal, and cultural mechanisms through which patriarchal systems sustain women’s subjugation by rendering their pain inaudible. Each chapter examines how silence, whether coerced, normalized, or legislated, functions as both a symptom and a strategy of control. Efiritha Chauraya and Dudziro Nhengu trace how colonial and kinship-based constructions of marriage in Africa have produced the “unrapeable wife,” exposing how marital rape is negated through laws that equate marriage with permanent consent. Maria Amir extends this analysis to Pakistan, where she reveals how silence itself has been juridically codified, transforming consent into a performative absence, one that is shaped by colonial legacies, honor discourses, and religious authority. In the South African context, S. Mkwanzani, M. Nathane, K. Chauke, and P. Maluleke expose the “shadow pandemic” of underreporting gender-based violence, showing how social stigma, economic dependence, and institutional mistrust sustain a culture of non-disclosure. Collectively, these chapters unmask how patriarchal orders construct silence as complicity and embed it within the very structures, familial, legal, and cultural, that claim to protect women.

1. *The Complexities of Counting Wife Rape in African Contexts: The Road Ahead.* Efiritha Chauraya (Midlands State University, Zimbabwe) and Dudziro Nhengu (Midlands State University, Zimbabwe)
2. *Pakistan's Consent Problem: Unpacking how a Culture of Control Informs a 'Silence as Acceptance' Paradigm.* Maria Amir (Lahore University of Management Sciences, Pakistan)
3. *A Purely Perplexing Problem: Non-Reporting of Gender-based Violence and Femicide in South Africa.* Sibusiso Mkwanzani (University of the Witwatersrand, South Africa), Motlalepule Nathane (University of the Witwatersrand, South Africa), K. Chauke (University of Johannesburg, South Africa), and P. Maluleke

## **Part II: State, Law and the Politics of Re-traumatization**

This section, *State, Law, and the Politics of Re-traumatization*, brings together four incisive chapters that expose how legal and institutional systems across South Asia and Africa not only fail survivors of sexual violence but actively reproduce harm through silence, denial, and selective recognition. Nazia Manzoor Musharrat Hossain's analysis of Bangladesh reveals how the masculinist state produces "rapeable" bodies through elite impunity and military complicity, delineating which forms of women's suffering are deemed "grievable." Puja Raj's examination of India traces the afterlives of rape within a web of epistemic and legal erasures, showing how state reforms, however progressive in appearance, sustain caste, class, and gender hierarchies while criminalizing certain bodies and sanctifying others. Turning to Nigeria, Raymond Adibe, Ruth Obioma Ngoka, and Issac Ndubuisi dissect the patriarchal underpinnings of the VAPP Act's implementation, exposing how institutional inertia and colonial bureaucratic legacies obstruct justice. In a related vein, Anthonia Achike, Eberechukwu J. Ezea, Adibe, and Christian Omeh reveal how families, religious authorities, and the justice system perpetuate a culture of silence that re-traumatizes survivors and erodes faith in legal remedies. Together, these chapters challenge the notion of state neutrality, demonstrating that law itself often becomes a site of re-traumatization: one that disciplines women's voices, polices their credibility, and circumscribes justice within patriarchal and postcolonial orders.

4. *Rape Debility and State Power: The Construct of 'Rapeable' Bodies in Contemporary Bangladesh.* Nazia Manzoor (North South University, Bangladesh) Musharrat Hossain (North South University, Bangladesh)

5. *The Afterlives of Rape: Epistemic Erasure, Legal Failures, and the Politics of Testimony in India*. Puja Raj (Alliance University, India)
6. *Patriarchal State Structures and Institutional Failures in Addressing Sexual Violence: A Critical Analysis of the VAPP Act in Enugu State, Nigeria*. Raymond Adibe (University of Nigeria, Nsukka), Ruth Obioma Ngoka (University of Nigeria, Nsukka) and Issac Ndubuisi (University of Nigeria, Nsukka)
7. *Socio-Cultural Barriers to Reporting Rape and the Lived Experiences of Survivors in Southeast Nigeria*. Anthonia Achike (University of Nigeria, Nsukka); Eberechukwu J. Ezea (University of Nigeria, Nsukka), Raymond Adibe, (University of Nigeria, Nsukka) and Christian B. Omeh (University of Nigeria, Nsukka)

### **Part III: Marginalization and Feminist Futures**

This section, *Marginalization and Feminist Futures*, brings together four chapters that reframe the politics of recognition and representation through intersectional, queer, and decolonial feminist lenses. Each chapter illuminates how language, affect, and embodiment shape who is recognized as a victim, a survivor, or a legitimate subject of justice, and how feminist praxis can imagine more inclusive futures. Linus Kambeyo and Martha Nahole interrogate the hypersexualization of LGBTQI+ people in Namibia, revealing how digital spaces reproduce moral panic while denying queer personhood and political agency. Macdelyn Mosalagae, Leslie S. Nthoi, and Fiji Phuti-Kelebonye turn to the Sotho–Tswana linguistic landscape to show how ambiguities in language and cultural norms obscure sexual violence against women and girls with disabilities, calling for contextually grounded feminist epistemologies. Portia T. Loeto examines Botswana’s selective outrage toward rape, arguing that adult women’s bodies are rendered “unrapeable” through deeply entrenched patriarchal logics of empathy and impunity. Finally, Suha Gangopadhyay re-centers *fear* as a feminist analytic of survivorship, foregrounding the body as both a site of violation and a terrain of ongoing negotiation, recognition, and resilience. Together, these chapters challenge the hierarchies of visibility that define whose suffering counts, whose stories are heard, and whose futures are imagined. They envision feminist politics that move beyond recognition toward the transformation of social, linguistic, and affective worlds.

8. *Are LGBTQI Individuals Just Sexual Beings? Myths and Realities About LGBTQI+ People in Namibia*. Linus Kambeyo (University of Namibia, Rundu Campus), Martha Nahole (University of Namibia, Rundu Campus)

9. *Conceptual Clarity of Rape in Sotho-Tswana Language: Focus on People with Disability in Botswana*. Macdelyn Mosalagae (University of Botswana), Leslie S. Nthoi (University of Botswana) & Fiji Phuti-Kelebonye (University of Botswana)
  
10. *E Seng Mo Ngwaneng, But on Who? The Problem of Selective Outrage and the “Unrapeable” Woman in Botswana*. Portia T Loeto (University of Botswana)
  
11. *Our Names, Our Fear, Our Bodies: Survivorship and Recognition*. Suha Gangopadhyay, Independent Researcher, USA