



## Is there a pattern of women abuse in the EFF?

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**Sexual violence should not be tolerated even in a revolutionary movement. Feminists in the movement have to speak out.**

The white media is obsessed with every movement that the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) makes. They have to be. Julius Malema's proximity to white supremacists like Lord Renwick has the white media eating right out of the palms of his dirty hands, so fundamental issues are seldom covered by the media. If there was ever a story that deserved more coverage by the mainstream media, it is the persistence of violence against Black women in the EFF. Sexism in all its forms permeates nearly every aspect of Black humanity. For men in the EFF, it is a rite of passage.

Little attention is being paid to the toll that the EFF's misogyny takes on society, particularly because of their social media faux activism. In its grimmest aspects, misogyny in the EFF manifests itself in brutal violence. The cases of Black women abuse are numerous, appalling and real. Just recently, the media reported that Patrick Sindane, an EFF member of the Gauteng legislature (MPL), was in trouble with the police after he allegedly assaulted his girlfriend in Soweto over the weekend.

This is not Patrick Sindane's first run-in with the law because of violence against women. A few years ago, Silunko Mabona and Patrick Sindane, were arrested and charged for allegedly being part of a violent gang rape of a Black woman sex worker. This was before they joined the ranks of the EFF but according to the media, Julius Malema was well aware of both men's history of sexual violence. Little did that do to stop them from climbing EFF ranks and Sindane even landing himself a position as MPL.

Sindane's suspension is not an act of valour from the EFF. He simply is not needed anymore by Julius Malema for reasons that have nothing to do with violence against women. It is very disingenuous to believe that the same EFF that made an accused rapist, whose victim allegedly disappeared under mysterious circumstances, an MPL, would suddenly suspend the same man for assaulting a woman. Make no mistake, Malema was opportunistic about his suspension of Sindane, who he had grown to personally dislike because he no longer bowed down to Malema and their male egos often clashed.

Then there is EFF Limpopo's provincial secretary, Jossey Buthane whose own family opened a case of assault against. Buthane was accused of brutally assaulting his aunt and nieces over an inheritance dispute. To this day, the EFF hasn't taken substantive action against him that we know

of.

Then of course there is EFF provincial chief whip Bunga Ntshangane, who was back in court also recently for allegedly abusing his power and assaulting junior employee, Maggie Klaas, in November 2017 during a heated argument. To put salt on the wound, the assault took place at the EFF offices in the provincial legislature precinct. To this day, no action has been taken against Ntshangane in the EFF. He reaps the benefits of a culture in the party that continues to protect and affirm attackers. They fail to acknowledge that violence against Black women in the movement is not isolated; it is a true reflection of the systemic patriarchal-misogynistic dynamics of leadership in the party.

Another problematic fighter of note is EFF spokesperson Mbuyiseni Ndlozi, who during his University of Cape Town talk, spoke about the continued violence women face in South Africa. Yet, continuously seemed to suggest that one's sexuality and having a non-binary gender, was a choice. Not to mention his erasure of queer folks throughout his whole lecture. There is violence in erasure. Ndlozi knew better, but because, like all misogynists, he is arrogant about what he thinks is the truth, he could care less about the prejudice and bigotry he was perpetuating.

Lest we forget that Ndlozi believes he has the right to comment on the bodies of Black women. "Summer comes early in Mbombela. If the girls here were not fat, they would wear their shirts in style, like crop tops, instead of wearing them like night dresses," he said to the Black women at Tshwane University of Technology, Nelspruit last year. The sexualisation of Black women's bodies in Ndlozi's comments exposed how his demeaning perception of plus-size Black women bodies is that they are flawed, unacceptable and available for objectification. This is misogyny.

In early 2015, The Citizen attempted to break a story on Mbuyiseni Ndlozi, who was being accused of possibly raping a woman and having her killed, during the party's first elective conference in Bloemfontein. The woman has never been publicly identified yet no real material investigation has taken place to make sure the alleged woman is indeed safe. What followed next was society and mainstream media struggling with the idea that the "People's Bae", could be a rapist. This is rape culture.

Here is a supposedly handsome man with a squeaky-clean image, accused of doing something monstrous. Societal concern immediately shifts away from the victim's wellbeing to questions of the victim's participation in their own rape. "Why would the People's bae, who can supposedly get anyone he wants, force himself on someone? How dare you even imply that? It is propaganda", they said, without any genuine regard for whether the woman alleged to be involved in the ordeal could actually exist, whether she was safe and whether she got justice.

I want to categorically state that Mbuyiseni Ndlozi, and every other handsome man or People's Bae that comes along, is as capable of rape, sexism and misogyny as the ugliest man in the darkest alley you can think of, to insist otherwise would be to perpetuate rape culture.

Ndlozi is a product of whiteness in more ways than one, but the most notable regards are his faux feminist political image, his contradictory adoration for colonial education and cult personality brand as the People's Bae. A brand that is sponsored and affirmed by white media to sway the masses towards neo-liberal or white benefactor politics under the guise of revolution. As a matter of fact, the EFF pretty much thrives on these three pillars, but one pillar that they seem to fail miserably to sell is their male feminist politics. Particularly with their commander-in-chief, Julius Malema, who has a long and well-documented history of sexism, misogyny and deprivation.

Black women in the EFF have become so used to the disrespectful, degrading, contemptuous and

even violent treatment of their bodies and identities that they have normalised Malema and company's behaviour towards them. Julius Malema is the same man that coined the proverb, "A woman that has been raped, will not ask for taxi money", a few years ago. A stance that has never been met with retribution from staunch EFF feminists.

EFF feminists appear in mainstream publications everyday, playing off violence, exploiting the plight and rape of women like Fezekile Khuzwayo, exploiting themes of gender inequality, femicide, sexism and patriarchy as long as the political compass points to the African National Congress, yet remaining quiet on the internal intersecting oppression of Black women by men inside the EFF. If we are going to open the door to the issue of rape culture, then we have a duty to be consistent and go all in. It is a big and important issue that deserves much more than political opportunism like that we saw when they staged a silent protest against President Jacob Zuma, in the name of Fezekile Khuzwayo and victims of rape, in August 2016, at the Independent Electoral Commission.

If that protest were genuine, it was going to be continuous after the President Zuma spectacle, especially with the amount of coverage it received. They were going to clutch onto that airplay and round them all up! Including their commander-in-chief, Julius Malema who played a crucial role in the public victimisation and humiliation of Fezikile Khuzwayo and who continues to degrade Black women in unimaginable ways inside and outside of the EFF.

Julius Malema, Mbuyiseni Ndlozi and the male EFF body in general, are complicit in maintaining the intersecting oppression of Black women.

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