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“My body-not your crime scene”: challenging rape logic in #TheTotalShutDown Protest

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Abstract

Each year, rape cases becomes so pervasive, yet so many of these incidences go unreported due to the circulation and utilization of rape logic as a tool of justifying rape and silencing the survivor. Rape logic suggests that women are sexually aroused when dominated, certain dress choices or behavioural tendencies and mannerisms are usually considered to be provocative and a way in which women 'ask for it'. These rape myths or as Helen Moffett (2006) calls it, "justificatory remarks", often delegitimizes the rape survivor's experience and report of rape in the sense that societal conditions, patriarchal culture, and the criminal justice system render the rape victim culpable and complicit in the offences committed towards them. These social structural conditions and relations ensure control and maintenance of patriarchal order. In this research, I examine #TheTotalShutDown protest which happened on the 1st of August, 2018 in all provinces of South Africa and the various forms of messaging through, images, slogans on placards and as well as digital life forms of the march and how a community of shared affect was established and also how rape logic was challenged by women used of placards. This research therefore poses salient questions such as; what are the feminist tactics and rhetoric used to tackle normative rape logic? What ways can we read visual images, texts and signs? How does the use of protest placards bearing slogans during #TheTotalShutDown protest, challenge existing rape logic? How does the digital form of the march help in forging a collective of political subjects? What are the afterlives, of these images, slogans and signs? To engage with these questions, I draw conceptually from Judith Butler's Performative Theory of Assemblage which attempts to show how bodies appear in public as forms of resistance; also, Carrie Rentschler's (2014) Response-ability; which entails the capacity to collectively respond to sexual violence and its cultures of racial, gendered and sexuality harassment. This research is feminist in its approach, as such, my positionality and self-reflexivity matters. Drawing from my reflexivity, this research utilizes auto-ethnography as a feminist method

of reading slogans and rhetoric on protest placards used during #TheTotalShutDown protest. I also utilize qualitative content analysis in coding and interpreting themes, images, slogans on placards in which women deployed during the march, in framing their sense of injustice and challenge existing rape logic which acquits the perpetrator and re-traumatizes the survivor. Through auto-ethnographic reading and qualitative content analysis of these protest placards, I argue that these placards and images raise important questions concerning practices deeply rooted in the history of colonialism, slavery and beliefs; and that the use of placards bearing slogans during #TheTotalShutDown protest directly challenges rape logic.

Keywords: Rape logic**,** protests placards, Twitter, #TheTotalShutDown, justice.