

## ***Nimophulelani na umfazi: Ndiyindoda. An investigation of the place of pastoral care in relation to both Jesus' masculinity and amaXhosa masculinity.***

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### **Abstract**

In 2019, the South African media put a spotlight on the brutal killings of women by men in the months of August and September. This femicide sparked conversations around masculinity which in turn spurred this article. Herein, I seek to investigate the space that will enable pastoral care to dialogue between Jesus' masculinity and the masculinity of umXhosa men. This will be done through a comparison of Jesus' words to the woman in Mark 14:6, which is included in the title of this paper, and the umXhosa word for masculinity, "ndiyindoda" (I am a man). The story of Jesus' healthy masculinity as God will be linked to amaXhosa masculinity. The aim of this article is to ascertain whether pastoral care can serve as a channel between these two masculinities. The relational indigenous methodology will be employed through narrative pastoral care. In that, narrative enables one to hear people's stories and link them to God's story.

### **Keywords**

*femicide; Umfazi; endleleni; masculinity; Jesus; umXhosa; pastoral care; indoda*

## **1. Introduction and background**

The first part of the title of this article are the words of Jesus in the isiXhosa version of the Gospel of Mark 14:6. The meaning in isiXhosa is different and has a stronger tone than the English versions that were consulted. This will be expanded later in this article. The second part of the title comes from the declaration of a young umXhosa man, marking a significant shift in his social status. This essay will narrate and discuss the Gospel of Mark chapter 14 verse 6 as it is understood by amaXhosa readers. Furthermore, this article will explore the concept of "ndiyindoda" in relation to Jesus'

words to the woman in this passage. The concept *ndiyindoda* will be critically looked at and unpacked for a better understanding. The link between Jesus' masculinity and amaXhosa masculinity will be discussed, along with the role of pastoral care in between the formation of amaXhosa masculinity and Jesus' masculinity. Recommendations on how pastoral care in a very secretive amaXhosa initiation ritual can find a place to introduce the healthy masculinity of Jesus will be made.

## 2. Methodology

Every person has a story to tell. Every person has something to say to themselves, to their children, and to the world about how they think and live, as they figure out their reason for being. When people cease to listen to other people's stories, they become buried within themselves and their own social context, and in turn feel the need to destroy other stories (James Cone, 1975, in Gathogo, 2008). "Her stories exist because of their parts and each part is a story worth telling, worth examining to find the stories it contains" (Carter 2003:1).

African women have revived stories by using one of the most powerful methodologies, namely, "storytelling." One of these African women is Professor Musa Dube, who has developed a unique methodology of reading a biblical story in the context of globalization through the technique of storytelling. Through storytelling, African women are bringing to the attention of the world their spiritual, emotional, and physical suffering and the potential they have to transform their situation of oppression (Phiri 2004). Kovach (2010) further indicates that sharing stories helps us find commonalities that assist us to make sense of the phenomenon in question.

This is supported by Carter (2003:40) who says, "Our stories are our theories and method, they carry ideological truths from one generation to the next. They also provide direction and govern our analytic inquiry by interrogating our epistemological positions." Christian (1987:52) takes this further when she says, "For people of colour have always theorized – but in forms quite different from the Western form of abstract and logic. And I am inclined to say that our theorizing (and I intentionally use the verb rather than the noun), is often narrative forms, in the stories we create, in riddles and proverbs, in the play with language, since dynamic rather

than fixed ideas seem more to our liking.” Nadar (2014) further asserts that “stories are a tool of knowledge gathering as well as knowledge sharing.” Kovach (2010) emphasizes the inseparability of the relationship between stories and knowledge. She adds, “Stories are who we are. They are both method and meaning-making.” This is acknowledged by Chilisa (2012) when she says that stories are a central part of the colonized Other. In that, stories do not serve only as a method gathering tool but are also the tools of analysis and interpretation that give another side of the story to deficit theorizing about the “Other” and allow “them” to frame and tell their past and present stories. Moreover, Morkel (2012) proclaims that we live by the stories that we have about our lives; they shape and constitute our lives. Therefore, knowledge is transferred through oral history and stories, and that knowledge is co-created within the relational dynamic of self-in-relation. This means the relational dynamic between self, others, and nature is central.

### 3. Self-location

Location is important. We are reminded by Absolon and Willet (2005, in Kovach, 2010) that self-location pins knowledge within experiences and that these experiences influence how we interpret phenomena. Self-location further ensures that individual realities are not misrepresented as generalizable collectives. Moreover, Kovach (2009) opines that we can only interpret the world from the place of our experience.

Nadar (2014) maintains that narrative research calls us to be reflexive about our positioning. This is confirmed by Riessman (2008) who acknowledges that the construction of any work always bears the marks of the person who created it. I position myself within black South African culture. I am an isiXhosa speaking black African woman. I grew up in the Eastern Cape of South Africa, formerly known as the Transkei. In this province, women and girls fetch water from the river early in the morning and early evening, some with their babies on their backs. Like many women and girls, I was taught from childhood to respect *indoda* (man) and know my place as a girl. Furthermore, from early in my life, I was exposed to the violence and injustices of apartheid. As a church going family, we were taught the Word of God through the mouths of the missionaries. It was emphasized

in the preaching and teachings of the church that a man is the leader and that women need to submit to the leadership of the man. I was one of the blessed ones in my family, I studied and became a pastor. I worked mostly in the poor communities in the Western Cape, a province of South Africa, as a social community pastoral care giver. It was around that time that I started emphasizing “indoda yintloko yekhaya” (the man is the head of the household) in my spaces of influence. The concept of *ndiyindoda* signifies that patriarchy is a social organization. It presupposes domination by a father or husband. Rokoczy (2004) explains that patriarchy is the norm and that women are considered inferior to men in every respect. I was programmed to view myself and all other women as inferior to men, and as a black South African woman, I was also programmed to view my race as the lowest of all races in my country. The perpetrators considered us as inferior human beings and, as a result, I viewed everything that makes me who I am as inferior, including our rituals, language, customs, and so on. Dube (2006:147) calls this “the areas of mental colonization, where languages were the greatest tool of colonial alienation; distancing oneself from the reality around and encouraging identification with something external to one’s own environment.” This puts me in the same position as the perpetrators of women and black South Africans. Therefore, I am a recovering perpetrator.

#### 4. Storying Mark 14:3–6

According to Dube (2000:17), despite the original environment, the text “travels in the world and participates in the history, continuing to write its story far beyond its original context and readers.” She further states that all interpretations are affected by the interpreter and her/his context. Thus, my experience as a black African IsiXhosa speaking woman informs how I read and interpret the passage in question: “Meanwhile, Jesus was in Bethany at the home of Simon, a man who had previously had leprosy. While he was eating, a woman came in with a beautiful alabaster jar of expensive perfume made from essence of nard. She broke open the jar and poured the perfume over his head. Some of those at the table were indignant. ‘Why waste such expensive perfume?’ they asked. ‘It could have been sold for a year’s wages[b] and the money given to the poor!’ So, they

scolded her harshly. But Jesus replied, ‘Leave her alone. Why criticize her for doing such a good thing to me?’” (Mk 14:3–6).

Let me start by acknowledging that in Mark’s narrative of the story, the woman is unnamed; in the Gospel of Matthew, however, she is called “a woman” (26:7), and in Luke’s version she is labelled a “sinful woman” (7:37). Nevertheless, John’s narrative differs from the synoptic Gospels. In John chapter 12 verse 3 the woman is identified as Mary, the sister of Martha and Lazarus of Bethany, and the incident takes place in her house. In any event, the scope of this paper does not allow for extensive probing into the identity and anonymity of this woman. Yet, to mention another noteworthy point, the description provided in the text portrays her as wealthy and brave. What more noble than to anoint the feet of Jesus who is both God and man? Who would not count herself happy, whether permitted or not, to touch and kiss the feet of Jesus? It is evident by Jesus’ words that the woman did “a good thing.” This text left me wondering, what if this woman had nothing to offer other than just sit next to Jesus? Would she have had the courage to touch and kiss his feet anyway? Even so, she was scolded and criticized harshly by the other guests. But Jesus stepped in and asked this question.

#### **4.1 Nimophulelani na umfazi?**

Most of the English versions that were consulted in this article used the following words: “leave her alone,” “let her alone; why are you troubling her,” “let her alone; why are you bothering her,” etc. However, the IsiXhosa version of Mark chapter 14 verse 6 stands out. When reading the written text or document, one picks up the overall tone of the writing. Sometimes we rely on the storyteller to put forward the emotions in the story. The Gospel of Mark does not provide us with the emotions of Jesus when He asks the question in Mark 14 verse 6, “Leave her alone. Why criticize her for doing such a good thing to me?” However, in the IsiXhosa version, it reads, “Nimophulelani na umfazi?” which literally means “why are you breaking a woman?” In other words, “why are you breaking her soul?” This kind of question communicates the emotions and tone of voice of the one who is asking the question. The tone of Jesus in this question can be interpreted as anger or sadness. The reason for this kind of interpretation is that one does not ask such a question, using these same words, without being either

angry or sad. It can therefore be deduced that Jesus was either very angry or sad when He asked this question. The unfair criticism towards the woman angered or saddened Jesus.

The male Jesus was moved in a negative way by his counterparts. Jesus, knowing the secret indignation of some of his disciples and their private murmurings at the woman, stepped in and protected her. Jesus was not protecting her as a superhero; instead, His protection was coming from the place of *umntu ngumntu ngabanye* – if you break her soul, you are also breaking my soul. “Soul” is described by Louw (2008) as a “relational and systemic entity. He further contends that soul in the New Testament describes the seat of life or life itself. Soul represents the person in the broadest sense.

Jesus stepped in to help protect the pillar that holds the personhood of this woman. It was not because the woman could not protect herself; it was in solidarity with her pain of having her soul being uprooted. According to Gathogo (2008), Jesus is the Christ who empowers, liberates, and heals our communities. He enables and empowers women to reject androcentric culture and to realize their worth and human dignity. He related to women as persons with worth and dignity. Jesus showed collegiality towards women as is evident in the story of the Samaritan woman in John chapter 4, verses 7–30, and the woman with the issue of blood in Luke 8:43–48. Jesus also challenged the stereotyped roles of women by women. For example, in Luke 10:38–42, where Martha was upset with Mary for not helping her set the table in the kitchen with plates, serviettes, cheese, and wine as it normally done by the host. This shows how healthy Jesus’ ego was. In a patriarchal society, particularly in the Jewish socio-religious structure, Jesus – the Rabbi who should know better – instead, constantly, and intentionally broke with culture, challenging the status quo.

## 5. Closer look at the concept “ndiyindoda”

When an isiXhosa-speaking man undergoes *ulwaluko* (initiation practices), he is told to shout, “Ndiyindoda!” (“I am a man!”). The shouting happens immediately after the removal of his foreskin. This declaration marks a significant shift in his social status. Kiguwa and Siswana (2018) explain that the cut represents a core foundation of one’s being and identity. It also

symbolizes that he is no longer an *inkwenkwe* (a boy), although he is not completely regarded as an *indoda* either, until he has fully completed the ritual (Mfecane 2016). “If one does not get circumcised according to the prescribed way of the living and dead ancestors, then that one cannot be included and accepted as a man in their religio-cultural system” (Ncaca 2014). It is very important because the initiation is an institution that seeks to carve identity. *Amakhwenkwe* (boys) are eager to go to initiation school because they are going to achieve something – manhood – an elevated status that affords them certain rights and privileges that will allow them to be taken more seriously (Ncaca 2014; Mfecane 2016). However, “medically circumcised men are not considered as part of the circle of legitimacy because they represent cowardice (*ubugwala*), an unmanly characteristic. Their ‘medicalized’ penises are a sign of their unmanly character” (Mfecane 2016:208). It is worth noting the characteristics of a circumcised man: They are not allowed to cry or be emotional; the umXhosa man is expected to be strong, brave, and tough. “A boy may cry; a man conceals his pain” (Mandela 1994:26). *Ingcibi* and *Ikhankatha* plays a huge role in the construction of the boy to manhood. There are many translations of *ingcibi*. One interpretation is “traditional surgeon.” Mdedetyana (2018), on the other hand, translates *ingcibi* as the “man builder or restorer.” However, I would like to use “a man-maker.” *Ingcibi* is not only responsible for the cutting of the foreskin, but also making sure that the initiates comply with all the requirements of the ritual of *ulwaluko*. One such requirement is to keep what is happening in the initiation school a secret (Penxa Matholeni 2020).

According to Ncaca (2014), the young men are taught to view relationships differently. However, for the sake of this article, I will only focus on one kind of relationship, namely, the relationships that are viewed with suspicion – both human and animal – in part due to beliefs around witchcraft. This includes women and girls, as they are associated with *umlaza*, *umgqwaliso* (both words are de-humanizing and untranslatable) and *ukuthakatha* (witchcraft).

During the graduation ceremony, the older or mature men of the village are given time to impart wisdom while giving their gifts and *ukuyala* (impart words of wisdom) to the newly graduated initiate now called *ikrwala* (singular) or *amakrwala* (plural) concerning their new life as a

man or men, respectively (Ntombana 2009:79). Remarkably, the mature and elderly women are not part of this important phase of these young men. What is the absence of significant women in these young men's lives communicating to them? To illustrate the above, *ebuhlanti* (kraal), for instance, is the space where one speaks to the ancestors and it is the space where the family keep their cattle. When the young man comes back as an *indoda*, he is now the one who will speak to the ancestors on behalf of the family, including his mother. His mother, as well as sisters, are not allowed to enter *ebuhlanti*. I therefore raise the question, how are these young men expected to relate to the women in their lives?

### 5.1 “Ndiyindoda” in relation to a woman and her home

“Ndim indoda kulo mzi”

The above quotation comes from one of the women that were interviewed in 2018 for the unpublished manuscript titled, “‘Ndiyindoda’: A critical assessment of the coming-of-age of isiXhosa men and implications of the concept ‘Ndiyindoda’ on a black professional woman.” This phrase literally means “it is me, who is a man in this house”. It does not only refer to sex or gender, but strongly communicates power, privilege, authority, and superiority. Therefore, to those on the receiving end – usually women and female children – the immensity of the effect of these words is striking. In that, an umXhosa man does not need to say anything more – the message received is loud and clear. The echoing of these words is enough to diminish the woman; they also place the woman and girl child in a certain position and space. This is when, what I call, the “migration identity” of a black woman, starts. The woman has to re-posture herself in her own home to accommodate *indoda yomXhosa* (an umXhosa man). What does this mean? It means that a woman needs to be less than who she is to have peace in her home.

As a result, we continuously see or hear about women being slaughtered by their loved ones, even though South Africa received international applause for being the first country in the world to outlaw discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender, and for adopting a progressive legal framework to address sexual violence. This is in contrast with the great Constitution of a newly democratic South Africa. Ntlama and Stevens (2016) acknowledge that our Constitution is widely regarded as a “beacon



of hope,” particularly for women’s rights. The black professional women who were interviewed for the unpublished manuscript mentioned above dispute the fact that the Constitution is favourable toward women and their rights. Instead, in their view, the Constitution has no place in the homes of most black South African women. The horrendous tales of young girls and women who went missing and were killed in South Africa over the past few months is testament to the above. South Africa is becoming an increasingly unsafe place for women to live in. The Crime Against Women in South Africa Report by Statistics South Africa, 2018, shows that femicide (the murder of women based on their gender) is five times higher than the global average. This means that in South Africa, women are five times more likely to be killed due to gender-based violence committed by men. The country recently experienced a femicide spree. The names of some of the women that were killed in the months of August and September in South Africa in 2019, include:

- Uyinene Mrwetyana, a 19-year-old University of Cape Town student, was raped and killed by a 42-year-old employee at the Clareinch post office where she went to collect a parcel.
- Boxing champion, Leigh Andre “Baby Lee” Jegels, was killed by her policeman ex-boyfriend, whom she had a protection order against. The SAPS sergeant later died in hospital from injuries sustained when he crashed his car, killing two other people.
- The body of 14-year-old Janika Mallo, who had gone missing in Heinz Park, was found buried in a backyard.
- Further details emerged of the killing of 19-year-old Jesse Hess, a University of the Western Cape student and church youth leader, found dead with her grandfather in their Parow flat.

Despite the protection provided by the Constitution, femicide remains rampant in our country. Maluleke and Nadar (2002) opine that religious and cultural factors influence and play a strong role in perpetuating violence and preventing women from standing up to it. The two African theologians, Oduyoye and Kanyoro (cited in Dreyer 2018), point out the theological and ethical consequences, as follows: “Until women’s views are listened to and their participation allowed and ensured, the truth will

remain hidden, and the call to live the values of the Reign of God will be unheeded.”

## 5.2 Christology and umXhosa men

“Nimophulelani na umfazi?”

In comparing Jesus with fellow umXhosa men, I draw attention here to some recorded and documented encounters of both parties with women by reflecting on the above-mentioned question of Jesus and the encounters of umXhosa man with his female colleague. Yet, I remind the reader of this article, that we cannot unlearn what we learnt in 2019.

“But Jesus replied, *Nimophulelani na umfazi?* (Mk 14:6).

In January 2019, an umXhosa male, Reverend Mehana, a Methodist pastor, came under fire after the recording of a telephone conversation, allegedly between him and a church member, was leaked. Mehana was heard making derogatory comments about his female colleague. He referred to her as “lo mfazi uputya-putya izifuba zamadoda” (“what kind of a woman is this who fiddles with men’s chests?”) The female in question, Rev. Sibhidla, was officiating and putting robes on the male members of the church. She was buttoning their robes, and this is where the comment of “fiddling with men’s breasts” came from.

On the one hand, the woman in Mark 14 poured a very expensive perfume over Jesus’ head. “Some of those at the table were indignant. “Why waste such expensive perfume?” they asked. “It could have been sold for a year’s wages[b] and the money given to the poor!” So, they scolded her harshly (Mk 14: 4–5). But Jesus saw the act of the woman as a beautiful thing, and subsequently asked them this question: “Nimophulelani na umfazi?”

On the other hand, Rev. Mehana saw what his female colleague, Rev. Sibhidla, had done, as fraudulently appropriating some forbidden power by intruding into territory that was exclusive to male pastors, and thus degraded her. By his actions, he demeaned a colleague that has as much right to officiate the ceremony as he does, and who is an ordained minister in the church just as he is. I am wondering how he would have answered the question, “umophulelani na umfazi?” if it was posed by Jesus? I cannot thwart the idea that his words shattered her soul into a million pieces.

Conversely, Jesus, the Jewish Rabbi who should know better, did not only allow the woman to touch him, but he stood in solidarity with her. The Jewish society where Jesus came from, treated women as inferior; and the social constraints placed upon women added to their perceived inferiority. Jesus, therefore, does not represent maleness, but represents humanness. He is not only promoting equal relationships but is the equalizer of humankind.

Upon further consideration, AmaXhosa societies put women and girls in an inferior position, especially after the initiation school. The initiation school elevates the boy's status to manhood, which represents superiority to women. *Ulwaluko* (initiation school) remains a definitive marker of masculine amaXhosa identity and is still informed by culture and tradition. On the contrary, Jesus challenges the status quo by trying to pave a new sense of “us” – fellow travellers towards solidarity – men and women *endleleni* (on the road).

## 6. Pastoral care: Bridge builder

“ingcwaba le ndoda lise ndleleni”; “amaqobokazana angalala endleleni kunyembelekile”

I would like to introduce these two metaphors here. The first one literally means “the grave of a man is on the road.” In other words, heroes die while in a battle or on a mission. The second one means “when the young maidens sleep on the road, you must know something is not right.” In actual fact, the words “something is not right” does not accurately capture the real meaning of this phrase. In other words, when they sleep on the road, the stakes are high. These young maidens metaphorically sleep on the road to accomplish their mission.

The men's grave is *endleleni* and the women sleep *endleleni*. *Endleleni* symbolizes the seriousness of the mission they – both men and women – are on. Interestingly, both metaphors have an element of spacelessness and vulnerability. This calls for courage on the part of both parties. Neither own their surroundings – they are strangers, along *endleleni*, on a mission. *Endleleni* is the place where one meets strangers, friends, and acquaintances. *Endleleni* expresses the notion – not of a place that brings us to the end – but

one that invites all fellow travellers to join in the circle and look beyond our reality to another unknown reality. One of the strangers who can be part of this circle is Jesus of Nazareth, who is a guest in a stranger's home, and who met and stood in solidarity with a strange woman, as a fellow traveller. The amaXhosa men on the road to the initiation school are encountering *amaqobokazana endleleni*; (maidens on the road) they all encounter Jesus as a fellow traveller. They are all powerless and vulnerable. That is the reason they may need to take different paths, to plot new journeys, to draw new maps, and to establish new rules for travelling to the initiation school (Dube 2000). This is affirmed by Cilliers (2017) when he says, "In liminality the borders remain ... open to all sides." There are possibilities of new revelations, re-transformation, and the possibilities of death *endleleni* and a new way of living, new hope, and the resurrection of something different, far from the norm. Therefore, *endleleni* is the space – a liminal space – where one experiences both fullness and emptiness, presence, and absence.

What kind of pastoral care giving is required *endleleni*? Community social pastoral care is the kind of pastoral care giving that is directed by the community's needs. It participates in social justice, it is part of the ritual ceremonies in the community, and it has a voice in the initiation school, *efukwini* (a place of birth) and *Kwantonjane* (the young girl's coming of age ceremony). It is a different kind of pastoral care giving that can migrate between *indoda* and Jesus of Nazareth. Community social pastoral care giving, together with the fellow traveller's re-frame, renames the future, and the narrative of what is happening in the initiation school is altered.

Coyle (2014) asserts that the Hebrew's spiritual identity was developed from a wondering people, worshipping a travelling God through the transferrable Ark as a place to worship. She further contends that space is an important route to hope. The Israelites had to move to the Promise Land. Louw (2008) acknowledges that people live in place and that space is therefore extremely sensitive to reactions, responses, and attitudes within space (atmosphere), and place (location, culture, context). The healing of life (*cura vitae*) is about the quality of place, space, and the positive affirmation of our being functions.

Jesus moved from heaven to earth, from the manger to the cross, from the cross to the grave, and then back to heaven. While on earth, Jesus

continued to move from one place to another for ministry. In being, Jesus was often present in the ceremonies of the community, for example, the wedding in John 2:1, in the homes of the tax collectors (Lk 19:1–3), and meeting a Samaritan woman at the well (Jn 4:1–24), to mention a few. What Jesus was doing (being) was community social pastoral care giving. This kind of pastoral care giving is not glamorous; it participates in the community's social ills. It does not come from outside with knowledge and superiority but emerges from within the community. This kind of pastoral care giving levels the playing field. This is the kind of pastoral care that act as a bridge for people who want to cross from boyhood to manhood, from the side of women to the side of men, and from white communities to black communities.

## 7. Conclusion

This article explored the concept *ndiyindoda* and compared amaXhosa masculinity and Christology. Further, I used the Gospel of Mark to show and compare how Jesus acted towards women in his day. By means of a contemporary example of an umXhosa man, this essay recorded a male, in a position of power, degrading his female colleague, causing her to feel like an intruder. Conversely, when we look at the example of Jesus, we see that he stood in solidarity with a female – a total stranger to him. Jesus defended her, not from the place of power and/or authority, but from a vulnerable place. He portrayed strong emotions, as the isiXhosa question suggests. In turn, social community pastoral care is recommended to bridge these two masculinities on the way to the initiation school.

The metaphors that were used symbolize a place that brings us not to the end, but invites all fellow travellers to join in the circle and look beyond our reality to another unknown reality. It is here where *all* travellers can begin to rethink gendered binaries, reshape the future, and break the walls that separate boys from girls, men from women, and whites from blacks.

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