



multiple

ukuhlukunyezwa

intersecting

okuphindaphindiwe


oppressions

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“In South Africa, a (black) woman tells a story of torture during the apartheid years. She describes the torture, the room, the people. She says that to survive, she imagined that her soul had left her body; she placed it in a corner of the room, so that it would not be touched by the atrocities being visited upon her body. But then she left it there. Telling the story to the South African Truth Commission, she said, she never went back to get her soul.”

(Daly & Sarkin, 2010: 44)



To what extent was the TRC (Truth and Reconciliation Commission) useful to Black female freedom fighters who fought for the liberation of South Africa? What is the status of Black female freedom fighters in post-apartheid South Africa? How would a historical and intergenerational approach contribute to our understanding of the legacy of apartheid in the lives of Black female freedom fighters? What are the long-term consequences of structural violence caused by patriarchy, sexism, colonialism, and apartheid? These are the overall research questions that arose from the text above and have informed this study. In this study the term 'female freedom fighters' is used to refer to Black women who actively contributed to the resistance of apartheid and were directly involved in the armed struggle. The text above was taken from a book that was written by Daly and Sarkin (2010) which highlighted a testimony shared by a female freedom fighter before the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. The TRC was established to help the country deal with the mass violence and gross human rights violations that took place during apartheid (Gobodo-Madikizela, 2016). The TRC can be seen as a quasi-judicial process that allowed perpetrators to publicly confess their crimes

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and express their remorse for violating the human rights of Black people (Gobodo-Madikizela, 2002). The TRC was also a space that allowed victims to testify about their mistreatment. Such an undertaking transformed the silence of trauma in South Africa (Gobodo-Madikizela, 2016). It provided victims with a voice, enabling them to break their silence and openly share their experiences before a national audience. It was an opportunity for victims to make their wounds public and to identify their perpetrators. The TRC process became a place where victims forgave perpetrators. It also provided victims with an opportunity to ask for help to rebuild their lives. Essentially, the TRC process provided South Africans with a collective understanding of their painful past (Goldblatt & Meintjes, 1996). However, was the TRC an empathetic intervention or was the TRC a transformative intervention? Or was it both? Did the TRC bring about justice and social and economic transformation? This study intervenes by exploring these questions and asking female freedom fighters. Such an undertaking will allow us to examine South Africa's past and present through a gendered lens. This can help us have a deeper understanding of how South Africa's history has shaped the lives of black women who fought for the liberation of South Africa.

A gendered criticism of the TRC is that it did not investigate the full extent of Black women's sufferings during apartheid (Ross, 2008; Borer 2009). It also did not fully address the serious and lasting consequences of apartheid on Black women. For example, there are Black women who did not testify during the TRC process. This meant that there were unable to speak, identify perpetrators, access psychological support services and reparation grants (Goldblatt & Meintjes, 1997). Those who managed to speak







would at times focus too much on men's experiences of violence and not their own (Goldblatt & Meintjies, 1996). This distorted the reality that black women were directly affected by apartheid and experienced gross human rights violations too. Furthermore, the use of sexual violence as a weapon of war was not adequately acknowledged in the TRC (Borer, 2009). This meant that many perpetrators of sexual violence were not held accountable. The TRC struggled to address South Africa's gendered past (Kusafuka, 2009). It struggled to effectively address gender inequalities in South Africa. While a gender analysis might require focusing on the experiences of female and male freedom fighters, I have chosen to exclusively focus on the experiences of female freedom fighters so that their experiences are documented, and their voices are heard. Such a focus does not mean that male freedom fighters did not experience gross human rights violations. In fact, male and female freedom fighters "were brutally beaten; slammed against floors and walls; flung around on beams; deprived of sleep; forced to stand or to sit on imaginary chairs for hours; teargassed; held in solitary confinement for months on end and forced to endure days of endless interrogation and even killed" (Goldblatt & Meintjies, 1996: 1). However, Black female freedom fighters were oppressed for being black and for being a woman. They experienced a double oppression. Thus, this study explores the multiple intersecting oppressions that Black female freedom fighters experience(d). In a way I am attempting to fill the gender gaps of the TRC process.

In 1994, South Africa held its first democratic elections. This was a historic moment because non-White South Africans were given an opportunity to vote for the first time in the

national elections. This is when Nelson Mandela became the first Black President of South Africa. The fall of apartheid ushered in a new dispensation; a new South Africa was born (Pirtle, 2022). Significant measures were put in place to eradicate racism, exterminate the racial hierarchy, and promote racial, social, political, and economic equity. A new Constitution that employed non-racist and non-sexist ideologies was developed and the 'rainbow nation' was born. Every South African had equal rights, and divisive race politics were tossed aside (Moodley & Adam, 2000). The 'rainbow nation' became an alternative to the racial separateness and interracial antagonism that existed before 1994 (Pirtle, 2022). The focus was on nation-building, non-racialism, and reconciliation. However, did such an emphasis happen at the expense of justice and retribution? This is a question that Black female freedom fighters will answer. Deganaar (1994); Gilomee and Schlemmer (1989) regard the rainbow nation project as a modernist discourse in a postmodernist age that forces uniformity rather than recognizing diversity. Deganaar (1994: 26) argues that "use of nationalist terminology is dangerous since it feeds on the myth of a collective personality and creates wrong expectations in the minds of citizens while not preparing them to accept the difficult challenges to create a democratic culture which accommodates individuality and plurality."

It is 28 years later since South Africa became a democratic country. However, it seems as if the legacy of apartheid still haunts present day South Africa, despite hopes that South Africa would be a non-racist and non-sexist nation (Pirtle, 2022). For example, the interventions of the TRC have not led to land reform and equality (Clark, 2019). When South Africa was on the verge of transitioning to a democratic





country, various stakeholders agreed that the unequal distribution of land from three and a half centuries of colonialism and dispossession would be effectively addressed. Land reform, however, has not happened in South Africa. In fact, land dispossession has directly influenced South Africa's structural issues, including the unequal distribution of power and wealth. Kepe and Hall (2016) argue that land reform is an important pro-poor tool that addresses racial trauma and helps to promote gender equality.

Contemporary research illustrates that the legacy of white supremacy continues to prevail in post-apartheid South Africa. For instance, a report that investigated unemployment amongst Black and White South Africans showed that by 2014 almost 30% of Black South Africans were unemployed and had the highest within group proportion of employees that were engaged in low skilled work (Business Tech, 2015). On the other hand, White South Africans continued to have grasp over economic resources as leading earners, graduates, and owners of various assets (Howrwitz & Jain, 2011; Seekings & Nattrass, 2005). Such a reality points to the legacy of apartheid and racial capitalism (Clarno, 2017). Racial Capitalism is a "process of deriving social and economic value from the racial identity of another person" (Leong, 2013: 1). There is, however, a growing Black middle class in South Africa. The Black middle class has more than doubled since the 1990s (Business Tech, 2015). Nevertheless, such growth or upward mobility is not enough to refute centuries of white privilege and systemic racism that continues to exist in post-apartheid South Africa (Bhorat & van der Westhuizen, 2008). Research regarding the state of South Africa suggests that there is opposing discontentment amongst Black and White South Africans about contemporary





racial hierarchies. Dolby (2001) argues that White South Africans are unhappy about racial redress legislation because these legislations affect white privilege and power. While Black South Africans, according to Silva (2012), are unhappy about the lack of opportunities available for them to escape the poverty and inequality created by the legacy of apartheid and colonization.

Even though extensive research has gone into understanding how the legacy of apartheid affects present day South Africa and South Africans, there is a need for research that explores the legacy of apartheid from a historical trauma and intergenerational trauma perspective. To address this research gap, this study explores historical intergenerational trauma in South Africa. In other words, I reframe the legacy of apartheid as historical intergenerational trauma. I propose that Black South Africans suffer from historical intergenerational trauma. Thus, I study historical intergenerational trauma from the perspective of Black female freedom fighters in South Africa. I define historical intergenerational trauma as a collective trauma that transcends generational boundaries causing multiple intersecting oppressions. I refer to these multiple intersecting oppressions as *ukuhlukunyezwa okuphindaphindiwe*. I use the term *ukuhlukunyezwa ukuphindaphindiwe* as a decolonial approach, labelling the multiple intersecting oppressions in one of the South African languages. I must clarify that this study is not trying to clinically diagnose the participants, but it is attempting to reveal how historical intergenerational trauma affects the lives of black women in South Africa. It also seeks to reveal the different ways in which historical intergenerational trauma exists in the lives of black female freedom fighters.

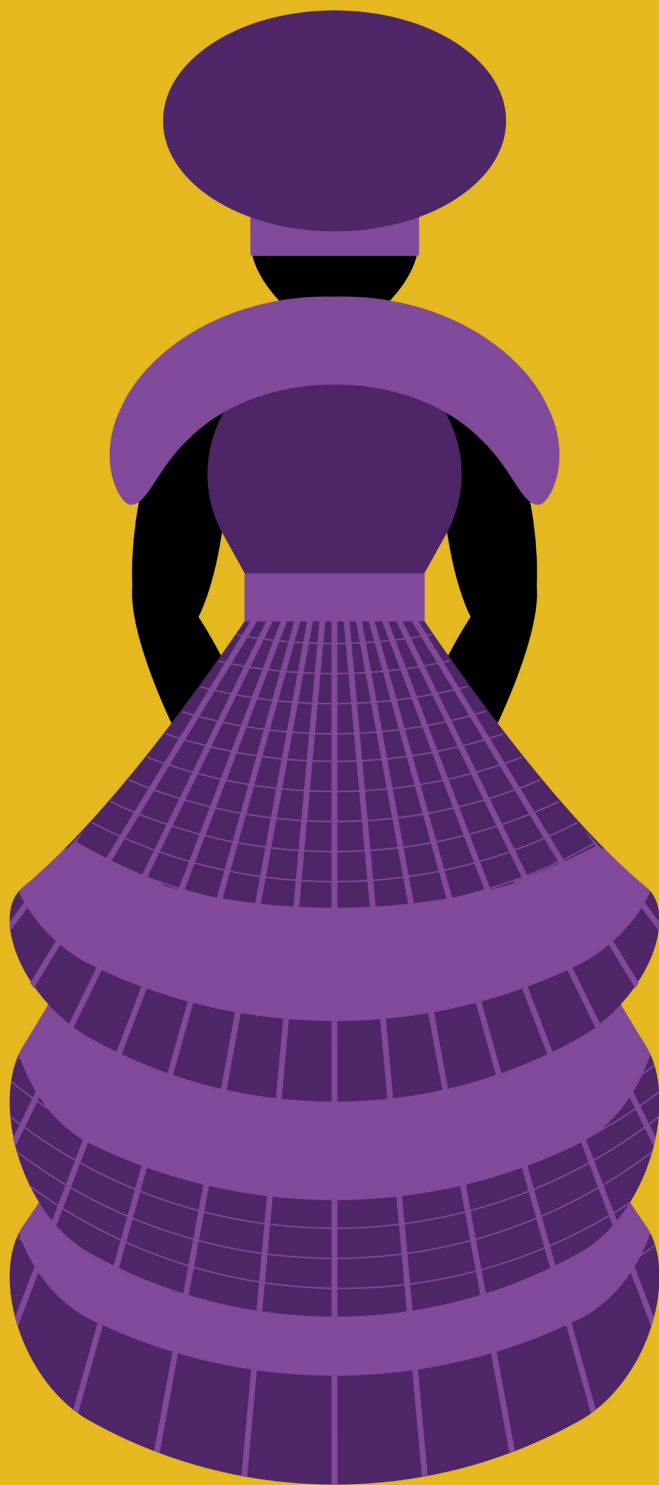




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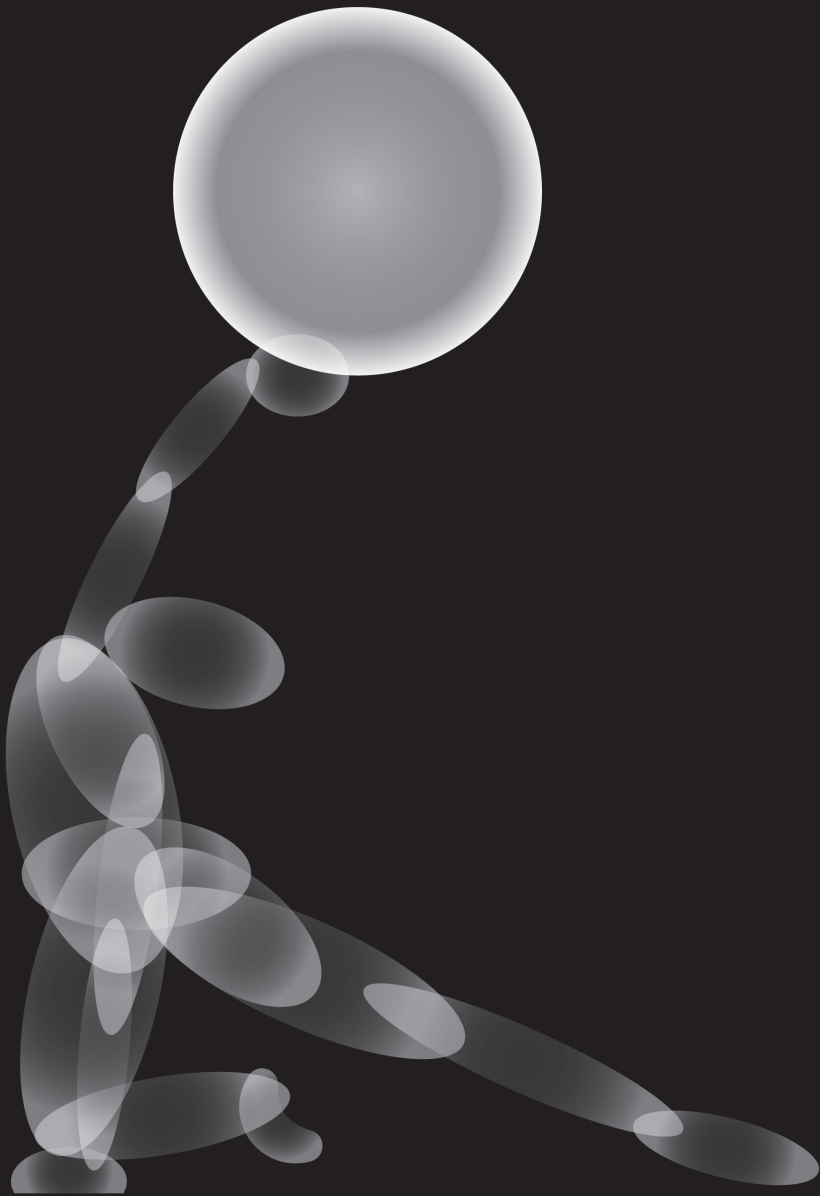




The study also suggests that an understanding of historical intergenerational trauma, from the perspective of female freedom fighters, can help South Africa and its citizens move forward from apartheid and colonialism.

When researchers studied the trauma experienced by survivors of the Holocaust, they discovered that survivors of the Holocaust suffered from historical trauma (Menziés, 2019). Cromer et al. (2018) defines historical trauma as the mass or collective trauma experienced by a group that shares an identity or affiliation. Historical trauma and its effects can be passed down to the next generations causing intergenerational trauma which is a cyclical and cumulative experiences of trauma that transcends generational boundaries (Duran & Duran, 1995; Brave Heart & DeBruyn, 1998). This can have a negative multigenerational effect on future generations (Jervis et al., 2006; Gone, 2013; LaFromboise, Albright & Harris, 2010). For example, research that investigated the effects of the Holocaust on the mental health of survivors and their descendants found that the descendants displayed symptoms that were like the symptoms exhibited by the survivors of the Holocaust (Rakoff et al., 1967; Rosenheck & Nathan, 1985; Sigal & Weinfeld, 1989). This shows that trauma does not only happen at an individual level. It also occurs at a collective and generational level and this study acknowledges that.

Though many researchers have looked at the legacy of colonization and apartheid in South Africa, little research has labelled the aftereffects of colonization and apartheid as historical trauma or intergenerational trauma. The work of Awutoli et al. (2013), for example, focuses on the epidemiology of trauma and posttraumatic stress disorder amongst South Africans. It does not specifically investigate historical and intergenerational trauma amongst





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Black South Africans. Johannes (2019), however, conducted a qualitative research study that looked at the memories and experiences of apartheid survivors. This study explored how apartheid survivors navigated the Castle of Good Hope - a national heritage site that was erected in 1666 in Cape Town (South Africa) by slaves during Dutch colonialism. This building is the oldest surviving colonial building in South Africa. Johannes (2019) positions the Castle of Good Hope as a site of historical trauma and a silent witness that has observed individual and collective trauma. Thus, spatial, and temporal conditions are created at the Castle of Good Hope, allowing survivors of apartheid to share their colonial and apartheid centered testimonies and traumas. Adonis (2018), on the other hand, did a qualitative study that conducted interviews with 20 non-white South African children and grandchildren (10 females and 10 males). Adonis (2018) emphasized that intergenerational trauma existed in the participants because of the structural legacy of apartheid. The studies conducted by Johannes (2019) and Adonis (2018) have been helpful in explaining the legacy of apartheid from a trauma angle but both studies do not concurrently tackle historical and intergenerational trauma in their studies. While both studies highlight the historical and intergenerational trauma amongst South Africans, Johannes (2019) focuses more on historical trauma and Adonis (2018) focuses more on intergenerational trauma. This study will give equal attention to both historical trauma and intergenerational trauma referring to it as 'historical intergenerational trauma'. It does this so that we do not miss important things. The study will explore racial and gender ideologies and hierarchies through the lens of Black female freedom fighters.

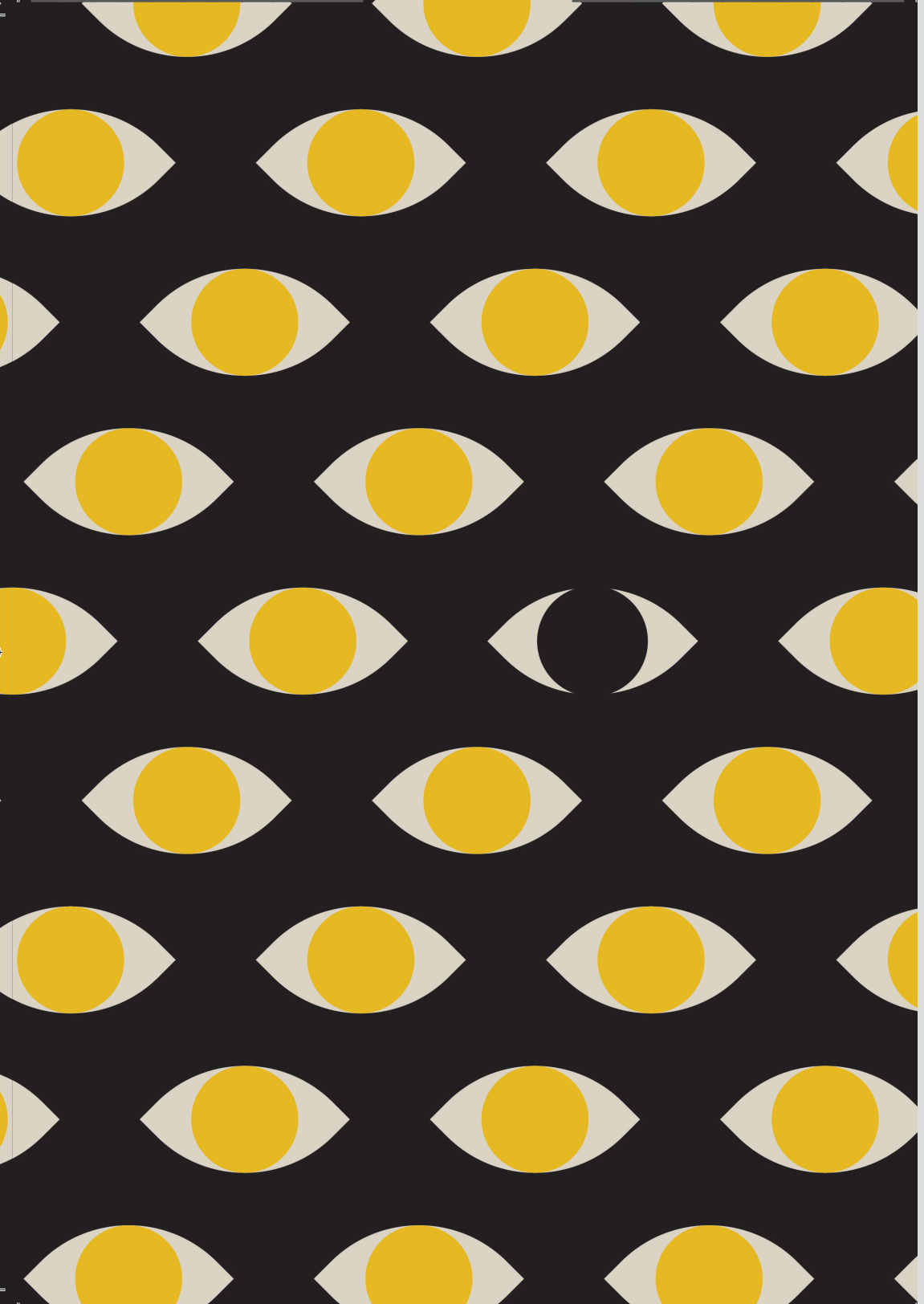




Firstly, the study will explore how female freedom fighters experienced apartheid as Black women and as freedom fighters. Secondly, the study will allow Black female freedom fighters to reflect on how their parents lived during apartheid or colonization. Such a reflection presents an opportunity for Black female freedom fighters to assess the similarities and differences between their experience of apartheid and that of their parents. The third aspect of this historical intergenerational trauma reflection is that it will explore whether female freedom fighters inherited historical intergenerational trauma from their parents. Lastly, the study will explore whether female freedom fighters have unconsciously transmitted historical intergenerational trauma to the next generation(s). This synchronized exploration contributes to the academy by advancing contemporary debates about violence, memory, and historical trauma expressions across generations. It interrogates questions of trauma and healing in contexts where historical intergenerational trauma exists. This critical inquiry and reflection studies the nuanced and complex interplay of historical intergenerational trauma, memory, and transformation in post-colonial Africa. This study will also examine the relationship between historical intergenerational trauma and resilience. It uses an interdisciplinary approach to explain how Black South African women remember histories of racial and gender trauma, and how these memories are shared across generations.

Such a contemporaneous undertaking can be useful to different disciplines such as History, Sociology, African studies, Gender Studies, Post-colonial Studies and Development Studies, etc. This research provides both a developmental and a historical framework that





enables scholars and policy makers to examine historical circumstances that have affected the lives of Black female freedom fighters of different generations. In this way, various problems, needs, views and experiences are captured – allowing for the voices of these women to be amplified and for solutions to be generated. South Africa is a good context to study historical intergenerational trauma because of its rich history. Such history can enable us to understand the connections between history, race and gender through the lens of Black female freedom fighters. They were part of the resistance movement and contributed to the liberation of South Africa but were restricted. They were restricted by the colonizer because they were Black women, and they were restricted by Black male freedom fighters because they were female. From the overall research questions mentioned in the first paragraph, I have created secondary research questions that inform this study.



Put differently, this research focuses on *black female freedom fighters* to primarily understand the following:

- How does historical intergenerational trauma affect black South African women who were freedom fighters?
- How does gender, race and historical intergenerational trauma intersect in apartheid and post-apartheid South Africa?
- How does the experience of being freedom fighters during apartheid shape South African Black women's political agency?
- What are the racialised, gendered and generational dynamics and consequences of war and conflict in South Africa?

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