

JOSINA Z MACHEL REAL LIFE STORY



Five years after a violent attack by her then-partner in which she lost sight in her right eye, Josina Machel is still fighting for justice for women, and shows no sign of letting up.

As the daughter of Samora Machel, first President of Mozambique, and stepdaughter of Nelson Mandela, Josina was introduced to activism at a young age. More recently, her own experience with violence and injustice has lent her activism new meaning and led to her founding the Kuhluka Movement. This foundation is positioned to accelerate social change on gender-based relationships and create safe havens for survivors of violence in South Africa.

Justice for Josina

In 2015, Josina had been dating Rofino Licuco for around three years when, during a confrontation after a night out, he struck her in the face three times. The result of the unexpected assault was that she lost sight in her right eye. What followed was an uphill battle with Mozambique hospitals, the local police, and finally the courts.

Two years after the attack and Josina's efforts to raise awareness for the crime and get justice, the Maputo City Court found Licuco guilty of domestic violence. They sentenced him to three years and four months in prison, with a possible five years suspension if he paid R66 million in damages. Instead, Licuco took the case to the Appeals Court. In June 2020, the court overturned the conviction on the basis that there were no witnesses, leaving no proof that Machel was assaulted, and causing her to lose her case, even though she had presented irrefutable evidence, as well as the testimony of recognised experts. She also provided a written confession from Rofino Licuco, but the court didn't recognise it as such.

Machel says, "I cannot imagine how many women have been thinking to themselves, 'Why should I go and report, if that's what's happened to Josina?' But at the same time, it gave me the strength to say, [alright], if that's the decision of the Appeals Court, let's go higher. Let's inform them, even if I don't win, the point has been made. It's to demonstrate what victims go through. And so, we have to continue rising."

And by taking her case to the Supreme Court, she is doing just that. Josina's experience is demonstrating that no matter who you are as a gender-based violence victim, the policing and legal system play such a critical role in how justice is served. This is a cornerstone of her foundation's efforts. Apart from showing women all over the world the importance of standing up to GBV - no matter the challenge - the real work will be changing how institutions need to serve GBV victims.

Half a decade after the attack, she says her life has been a bit of a rollercoaster. "There are times when you think, okay, I've got it together, I know what happened and I've been able to deal with [the event] and the emotions. Then, you go through a phase where you're concentrating on making sure justice is served. In my case, it took almost two years."

For three weeks in March 2017, she hardly left her bed. "I kept hiding. I kept asking, why did I do that to myself? Perhaps I should've pretended that something else had happened, and just moved on."

But she chose to fight, not just for her rights, but those of all women who are victims of gender-based violence.

“You know how the beauty of life is, and how God made us so intrinsically beautiful and resilient. That’s what I call Kuhluka.”

The name of her foundation, Kuhluka, refers to the process of rebirth after a catastrophic event - much like a patch of land that has undergone a natural disaster like fire or floods, and seems forever barren, yet surprisingly returns to life later. “That’s exactly what happens to survivors of violence. You wake up and realise that you’re able to appreciate the sun. My kids were able to make jokes and I was able to actually laugh at them and enjoy it.”

But it’s not always easy

“Because of what I’ve chosen to do, which is work with victims and survivors of violence, my journey has been more uncertain. Most of the time when I engage with victims and I hear what happens to them, it takes me to a very ugly place in myself. And so, I have to do the journey of healing and building myself up.”

In addition to the Kuhluka Movement, Machel is a co-founder of the Her-Life project which offers help to women in emergency situations. She also serves on the international boards of the Graça Machel trust, the Emerald Group, the ABC Atlas Mara in Mozambique, and the Zizile Institute for Child Development. In addition, she is the director at the Samora Machel Documentation Centre.

When it comes to gender-based violence, Josina says it’s often the emotional attachment women have with the perpetrator that betrays them and makes women so hesitant to speak up about the abuse they suffer.

In the case of the young girl who’s abused by an uncle, it’s normally an uncle she respected and loved. The abuse might start as a secret act of love between them. Later, the perpetrator’s threats start:

- If anything happens, I’ll tell your mom
- Nobody will believe you, and you’ll be alone
- You’ll be embarrassed
- It’ll be your fault
- Everyone will blame you
- I’ll hurt you/your siblings
- I’ll kill your mom
- I’ll kill you

“And we grow up with that, until we date men who are abusive,” Josina says.

This emotional attachment to the perpetrator is not only dangerous, it can also be deadly. A study published in PLOS Medicine indicated that in more than half of the female murders where the perpetrator had been identified, the perpetrator was an intimate partner.

“We’ll only be able to eradicate GBV when all of us make it a personal issue,” says Machel. “We criminalise people who steal, but when it comes to violence, we sweep it under the rug, we pretend we don’t see it, we give so many excuses, and we don’t report it. And then we get surprised when we get these atrocious numbers thrown at us.”



What's the role of the law and law enforcement when it comes to fighting GBV?

Individuals at all levels need to understand what GBV is and how to address it accordingly. This begins with the policeman writing down an accurate account from the GBV victim and not their own interpretation. "If the woman says, 'I was shoved to the floor', the policeman needs to write down exactly that, not 'she fell on the floor', because that changes the story," says Josina. "From the moment the woman reports, it is a crime. It needs to follow all the accorded steps. When it goes to the magistrates, they need to understand that when a woman comes to you and says, 'I need a protection order because this man has been intimidating me', they need to give the protection order. They need to understand that she's in a position of fear."

Furthermore, magistrates need to be trained in how GBV manifests, and they need to know how to record appropriately, so when the victim decides to go to court, she can do so. Training needs to be done properly at each level so that everyone understands how the system works, from the police to the magistrates to the judges.

"Only then will we be able to have effective justice when it comes to GBV," says Josina. "Until then, it very much depends on everyone's understanding of what GBV is."

Someone who grew up seeing their mother beaten each time she burnt the food, might not recognise the violence taking place when a woman complains because she got slapped. This will not only influence how the case gets recorded, but it's also likely to embolden the perpetrator and worsen the situation.

"And it starts at family level. My son needs to understand just because he's upset, that doesn't mean he can go banging on doors, he needs to control his emotions. And my daughter needs to understand that she cannot bully her younger brother just because she's older."

Take a stand and make a change

There are three main roles when it comes to GBV, explains Josina.

"You're either a victim/survivor, or a perpetrator, or an enabler. There's no-one who can say: 'I don't know anyone who's been abused'. As long as we have so many not taking a stand, we will continue to have an issue with GBV. Men need to stop staying quiet when they know people in their lives are mistreating women. If you have a friend who is abusing his girlfriend, speak to him and report."

To the woman stuck in an abusive relationship

"Shouting, shoving, pushing and slapping are not examples of love. This is violence and abuse, pure and simple. Not many women are in a position like I was where they can get beaten and on the same day, end



the relationship. However, women have to understand that abuse is a crime. You need to communicate. There are safety plans available on websites. It might take time, but you can start to make a plan to get out. Start gathering information, start preparing, whatever you need to do, but have a deadline and make a choice. This is a risky relationship, and it can end in death.”

We can no longer provide excuses for the abusive men in our lives - we're simply expediting our journey to the grave. By excusing their behaviour, we're not protecting ourselves, and if children are involved, we're not protecting them either.

Paraphrasing her father Samora Machel, she said: “I have lost a battle, but we have not lost the war.”

The following support structures are available to victims of GBV:

POWA (Persons Opposing Woman Abuse)

Lockdown Counselling Number: 076 694 5911
Counsellor available from 8:30 – 16:30 Monday to Sunday

Akeso Clinics:

Emergency contact number: 011 430 1890
Website: www.akeso.co.za

SAPS Emergency

Contact number: 10111

Gender-Based Violence Command Centre

Contact number: 0800 428 428

STOP Gender Violence Helpline

Contact number: 0800 150 150/*120*7867#

Saartjie Baartman Centre for Women and Children (SBCWC) - Cape Town

Contact number: 021 633 5287

Website: www.saartjiebaartmancentre.org.za

The Frida Hartley Shelter - Johannesburg

Contact: 011 648 6005

Website: info@fridahartley.org.

Rape Crisis Centre

Contact: 24 hour Crisis Line: 021 447 9762

Nisaa Institute for Women Development

Contact: 011 854 5804/5 or check out their website for more information: www.nisaa.org.za
Shukumisa

Contact: 021 447 1467 or visit their website for details: www.shukumisa.org.za

Agisanang Domestic Abuse Prevention and Training (Adapt)

Contact: 011 786 6608 or adapt@worldonline.co.za.

Masimanyane Women's Rights International
www.masimanyane.org.za



Gender Sonke Justice

Email us at info@genderjus_ce.org.za
Cape Town: +27 (0)21 423 7088
Johannesburg: +27 (0)11 339 3589
Bushbuckridge Satellite Office: +27 (0)13 795 5076
Gugulethu Satellite Office: +27 (0)21 633 3140
National Emergency Response: 10111
National Medical Emergency: 10177
or 112 on cell phone
Domestic Violence Helpline: 0800 150 150

The WIIN - Women Integral Impact network

Empowers women with knowledge and support to prevent and overcome GBV. Trains and uplifts economically through partnership.
+27 82 221 6348
info@wiinwomen.com

ProBono : Legal Advice

303 Anton Lembede Street (Entrance on Durban Club Place)
Suite 701, 7th Floor
Durban Club Chambers
Durban
4001
t: (031) 301 6178
f: (031) 301 6941
projects: shamika@probono.org.za
clinics: gugulethu@probono.org.za
For the best legal advice.

HEAD OFFICE:

1st Floor West Wing, Women's Jail, Constitution Hill
1 Kotze Street, Braamfontein,
Johannesburg
t: 011 339 6080
f: 086 512 2222
e: info@probono.org.za



If you or your loved one needs support during this time, reach out to your ICAS EHWP via your toll-free number or the ICAS On-the-Go App to seek counselling support.

Toll-free:

(from land and mobile phones)
Or request a call back: ***134*905#**
Company App Code:
Applicable to you and those who live under your roof.

References:

<https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/323465#treatments>
<https://www.therecoveryvillage.com/drug-addiction/types-of-drugs/>
<https://www.therecoveryvillage.com/drug-addiction/types-of-drugs/>
<https://netcare.co.za/News-Hub/Articles/understanding-substance-abuse-and-addiction>
<https://www.helpguide.org/articles/addictions/overcoming-drug-addiction.htm>
<https://www.prcorecovery.co.za/contact-us>
<https://www.helpguide.org/articles/addictions/overcoming-drug-addiction.htm>

