



# 1-in-9 Campaign

Renewed Focus on the Other Eight

‘It’s about learning about our own stories and how we can use this knowledge to change our narratives.’

- Mpumi Mathabela (Campaign Coordinator)



## Forged in fire - the beginning

The year was 2006. HIV-activist Fezekile Ntsukela Kuzwayo, known to the public only as Khwezi, faced off against Jacob Zuma, then the deputy-president of South Africa, in court. She had accused him of rape. She stood her ground amidst death threats from Zuma's supporters, harassment from the ANC Women's League and widespread torment from the ruling party.

She was not alone in her stand. The 1-in-9 Campaign was born during this particularly turbulent, triggering time in South Africa. Zuma, who would go on to become President of South Africa, was acquitted on the charges against him. The organisation, however, continued to support survivors of sexual violence in navigating the social landscape and the criminal justice system.

According to popularly cited statistics, one in three women will experience sexual violence in her lifetime. According to the South African Medical Research Council, only one in nine rapes are reported to authorities. It was, initially, the latter group that the organisation supported.

Mpumi Mathabela is the 1-in-9 Campaign coordinator. She says despite the impact they were making through their work within the criminal justice system, there came a day when they realised that that was not enough. "Our name is a statistic from that time period - the time of Zuma and Khwezi - and it was a work that was incredibly impactful. We got to a point where when people did not see us outside court they would call and ask where we were."

More needed to be done. "Only one in nine women report their rape to the police. So one woman reports. One woman we go to court with. One woman we push for the justice system to do its job. One woman. Just one in nine." She shakes her head. "But what about the other eight..."

The question hangs in the air as the magnitude of the statement sinks in. "What happens to the other eight? Are they silent?"

The answer, she says, is of course not. "They are simply speaking out in their own ways. We have progressed from working with that one in the criminal justice system to branching out to the other eight too. This is our shift. We are reintroducing and redefining feminist movement building, but we are not just focusing on the one woman who makes it to court anymore."



## Feminist Art for change

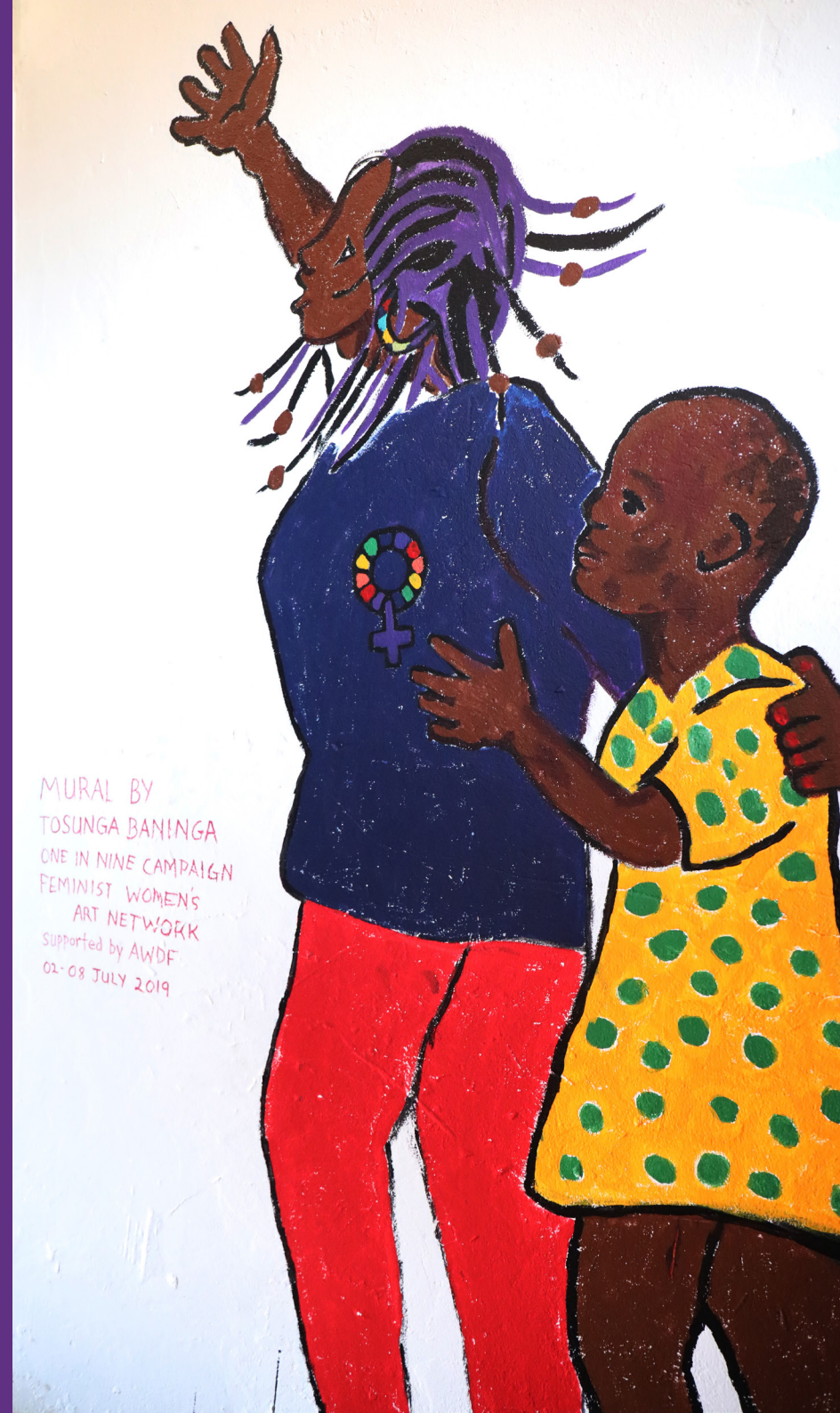
Judy Seidman heads up the 1-in-9 Campaign's Feminist Women's Art Network. According to her, art is a manifestation of twin beliefs. Firstly culture is a weapon of struggle, and secondly the personal is political. These are both inherently feminist principles. Her approach was forged in the fires of the African liberation struggles. "One thing that is becoming clearer is that society needs the feminist movements to ask questions and to address issues," she explains. "We need to mobilise society. We need to address the patriarchy. And we need women, and queer women, who are directly and daily affected to lead this movement and take that stand."

Art, says Judy, is one way to do just that. "The premise comes from the liberation struggle. Art has always been a way to fight oppression and against being silenced." In the 80s, at the height of resistance against South Africa's Apartheid regime, art was used to communicate. "It was about expressing yourself and telling your story, but it was also a way to speak to the community about the issues they faced."

Art is the platform, and art is the message. By using art in this way, a collective approach is facilitated where women can come together and express what is wrong with the world they live in, while also exploring solutions on how that world can be changed, Judy says.

Mpumi says feminist political education is important, but the 1-in-9 Campaign has found a way to link that political education to feminist art and self-expression. "Feminist art, or art about women's issues, is one way to push that education, but in doing so not only learn but also amplify women's voices to ensure that our stories are told."

They first realised the importance of impactful communication outside the courthouse when supporting Fezekile during her trial. "We used art to get our messages across and draw attention to the issues at hand," Mpumi remembers. "But from what we learnt, what we knew and what we had, we realised that we could share. That's how we started helping other groups create impactful messages and impactful media to draw attention to their cause."



MURAL BY  
TOSUNGA BANNINGA  
ONE IN NINE CAMPAIGN  
FEMINIST WOMEN'S  
ART NETWORK  
Supported by AWDF  
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## ‘Helping you to help others’

It was in this capacity that the organisation became involved with Norma Mbele from Tosunga Baninga. Situated in Evaton, a township on the East Rand of South Africa’s Gauteng province, Tosunga Bangina is a safe space. The small building’s dusty exterior does not hint at the treasures within.

Stepping through the plain wooden door, however, the world transforms. The walls are covered in colourful images of power, of pain and of passion. Women’s faces stare back from each corner of the room. A group of women protesting with messages about consent scrawled across their shirts. A woman being pulled from the water to safety by other women as she is chased by two large sharks, labelled rape and gender-based violence, as a storm called patriarchy brews overhead. In the corner, the shadow figures of women leading children to safety. And the main mural - the silhouetted profile of a regal woman with a defiant lift to her chin in a traditional headdress, with the outline of Africa painted in rainbow colours at its centre. Framing her face: ‘Tosunga Baninga’. This is a phrase in the Lingala language of Central Africa, meaning ‘helping you to help others’.

Norma Mbele is a survivor of physical and sexual violence. She guides women through court engagements. She interacts with prosecutors and other role players in the criminal justice system to help put a face to the victims of femicide and the survivors of violence, trying to re-instill a sense of humanity in the system and those who run it.

Her open and smiling face hardens when she speaks of how they have experienced more than ten femicides in Evaton in a very short period of time. The most recent - just three streets from the building with the colourful interior.

“In this area you are lucky if you are just raped and not murdered,” she says wryly. “It’s so difficult when you hear of another woman who was raped. Another woman who was murdered. And no justice for the one before her. Or the one before that.”

Norma says as an organisation of survivors, for survivors, they realise that there is no immediate healing. “We definitely leave each day lighter than the day before,” she says. “Our closet was full, but in helping others unpack theirs we also begin to unpack our own.”

The failures of the system still haunt those fighting for justice. “Last year (2018) three kids were raped by their neighbour,” Norma remembers. “The neighbour is still free. The child who spoke out against him disappeared on 8 December.”

The concept of Tosunga Baninga was born when Norma was living in a shelter for women who had experienced domestic violence and abuse, after escaping her own dire situation. She soon realised that the so-called safe space was not, for many women, as safe and inclusive as it should be.

She glances at the mural-covered walls with a smile. “I was in the shelter, and I was not filled with hope. I said one day when I open a shelter, I want to give hope to every woman. I saw how foreign women were treated in the shelters, how they continued to suffer in these ‘safe spaces’. I wanted to create a space that would accommodate everyone; where every woman would be accepted.” She also saw the discrimination against lesbians, non-binary and transwomen who sought help.

In using a language not native to South Africa, and incorporating the LGBTIQ+ rainbow flag into the logo, she hopes that every woman feels welcome and included, safe and loved. “It’s nothing fancy, and it’s not a shelter,” she apologises. “But it is a safe space - whether you are a foreigner or a lesbian. And you are welcome here.”

When the women who have passed through Tosunga Baninga find their feet again, and ask if they can assist in some way or make a donation to show their gratitude, despite not having much, Norma always has the same answer: “I always say the donation we want from you is to see women helping women. So let us fix each other’s crowns. That is where we start, and that is how you can contribute.”

Although they offer counselling, women are tired of talking. “They feel they cannot say things again which have already been said too many times. But art... art is different. Art therapy brings healing. Art brings people back towards themselves.”





## Impact communications through protest art

The 1-in-9 Campaign has partnered with Tosunga Banninga in a number of ways. When they started protesting outside femicide trials, handwritten messages were scrawled on old pieces of cardboard. “These were powerful messages straight from our hearts, but the media did not focus on our messages or on our makeshift signs.”

This changed after an art workshop with the 1-in-9 team. “The workshop shaped us, liberated us and helped us convey the message that we wanted heard. The media saw these beautiful posters and strong messages. And suddenly, they took notice.”

As the head of the 1-in-9 Campaign’s Feminist Women’s Art Network, Judy was of course involved in this process. “The key outcome was to mobilise the community and direct action. Not just another group of angry women, but as people with a voice, with a message, about a specific issue.”

Mpumi agrees that the poster creation was a resounding success. “This feminist art, the art for liberation, helps the women mobilise - not as feminists or as activists, but just as women who are tired of walking around and being scared,” she explains. “The cases around women who have been raped or killed or abuse drag out, they take long. Decades later and we still don’t have justice.” Creating messages and media that draw attention to this is one way to challenge the injustice and to amplify the voices of the women who are affected by these failures.

Judy says that what becomes evident after each art session is that despite the individual differences between women, advocacy groups and communities, there are many overlapping areas. “Groups are often split according to issues, but with art all the issues tend to come up and it helps us see the connections and how these issues intersect.”

Mpumi says they are not actively teaching feminist analysis or women-focused analysis to workshop participants. “We don’t teach this, because we don’t need to teach this. Women already have this knowledge, and we just help to guide it.”

Part of this guidance is looking at area mappings. The workshops help identify the problems in each geographical area, how the symptoms manifest, who the perpetrators are and who targeted. “We have to work together, as women, to see the monster for what it really is,” Mpumi explains. “And then we need to fight it.”

It is not easy, but hardships have shaped them and the work they do today. “We were born in fire,” Mpumi shrugs, referring to their days in court with Fezekile, “And now we are using those same flames to start wildfires.”

She acknowledges that this fire does not manifest the same for everyone. “We don’t all have to be activists outside court. We can all fight it in our own way. We need to activate women and amplify their voices and spread the message, empowering them to spread the message in their own way.”

Mpumi says this reclamation of individual and collective narratives is an important part of the work they do. “We want to tell our own story, but also the stories of the work done by women and feminists in general.” These stories, she says, are sorely lacking. “You know, as women and as feminists, we don’t have books about our work, or literature or vaults from the past.”

This must change. “We have started building a feminist art archive. Women are erased from history, so we decided to write our own. We wanted to create media that looks like us, and reflect our experiences.” She looks at the murals on the walls around her, and her eyes fall on the figure of an adult woman holding the hand of a small girl. “For ourselves, and for our daughters.”







## Feminist art for personal and collective healing

Art, however, is not just about a message to the outside. It is also a way to facilitate dialogue and healing. “We have a number of art techniques. One is body mapping, which is a form of therapy, as are these murals,” Judy says while gesturing to the brightly painted walls of Tosunga Bangina. “For the women who come here looking for safety, the art they see is a welcome message, and we reinforce these feminist values through the murals, posters and t-shirts we help create.” For the women involved in the painting, the process is part of reclaiming their story and their space.

Mpumi says feedback from workshop participants shows that they have not only found a way to express themselves, but also empowered themselves by locating their own struggles within the greater struggle of women. “They can now place their personal experiences in the larger experience of other women and the feminist analysis. Now they want a focused session on feminism.”

She says the workshops connect women to the bigger picture, “to know that the battles women face are not just in their community, or just in the Vaal area, but of women in general.” By starting their healing, they want to grow in feminism.

Mpumi says that while women have started to come to terms with their personal experiences, the impact on the community is harder to quantify. “I won’t claim that the number of incidents have gone down. They haven’t, but the narrative is changing.”

Formal structures like local churches know also want to know how they can assist. There has also been increased media exposure for existing cases, and the challenges of the women of Evaton have been brought to the attention of local, provincial and national government, even resulting in meetings with government ministers.

“The situation is horrific,” Judy says with a shudder. “The stories are horrific. But the sense of helplessness was the worst, I think. These women felt that there was nothing that they could do... Now they feel there is a way forward.”

Mpumi calls this shift an ‘ah-ha’ moment. “Once that moment arrives, it brings with it a sense of excitement and activation. And it is there, every day, in so many things that they do.” Not just when they are taking a stand or marching to court. “The helplessness is replaced with fire, with a sense that something can be done. And this fire spreads.”

Norma agrees that the mood in Evaton has changed. “We are a team now and it is so beautiful to see. If more organisations could do this, we can eradicate violence against women and smash the patriarchy. I know we can.”



## The way forward

Mpumi says the organisation is repositioning itself to focus on using art, knowledge production and feminist movement building. “I see us playing a big role in documenting, having women tell their own stories and making their stories accessible to other women.”

The campaign’s focus has always been on adult women, but this is changing. “We want to target younger girls as they are being groomed into a patriarchal system daily. Society sees them as women and not as children. This puts them at risk.” These systems must be identified, and then dismantled. “This work needs to start before a woman becomes a survivor; before she is forced to be strong.”

Judy says there is nothing wrong with teaching women their own strength, but how this is taught is often problematic. “We’re always telling girls that to survive the world they need to be strong; they need to be strong on their own to survive. But we are telling them to be strong as a collective.”





## Case Study

Dineo Ramothibe - age 22



"Art helped us drop our masks and be who we really are. It helped us to know ourselves and to know each other. The first day we were told we were going to draw our hands and I thought: my hand? What does my hand have to do with anything? But it actually had a lot to do with everything, and the exercise opened my mind. Then we sat... and we started talking about our hands. Women started getting up and talking about their hands, what they represented and what they had been through. I looked at my own hands and the colours on my paper started making sense. I stopped listening to their stories. I was just looking at my own hands. And then I started crying. I spoke about things I had never spoken about before in my life, not even to my grandmother. Looking at the other women around me, women I looked up to, talking about their own struggles... it gave me the courage to talk. To talk about my hands. I went to bed that night and I slept. I slept peacefully for the first time in a long time. The next day I arrived and they said we were going to do body mapping. My whole body? After what happened with just my hands?" She laughs. The progress from the previous day repeated. But where she had been apprehensive the first day, the second day just flowed. "It was lighter. The mood was lighter. The ambiance was lighter. The people were lighter. And then Judy comes again, and say now we have done the hands, we have done the bodies, now we are going to do the wall!" She was nervous, never having taken part in an art project before, knowing that the marks she made would be permanent. "I have to come here every day and look at this wall... every day... FOREVER! Now when I walk in, I'm in awe. We all did the wall. We laughed and we cried. And we healed. I can't believe we even did this. That I did this." She turns her palms upwards. "With these same hands."





## Case Study

Zanele\* Rape survivor - age 22

“In Evaton, you’re lucky if you’re in your 20s and you’ve never been raped, abused, mugged or beaten. When I went to court for the first time to support and to protest a case of femicide, a crime scene was staged, with a ‘murdered’ woman on the ground, surrounded by blood and police tape. It was shocking. It was radical. But it was powerful. We are under siege. Sometimes you have to be radical if you want people to pay attention. Otherwise it just becomes another murder of another girl in another township. Another girl like me. I did what I could to help that day and that is how I met my new family.

I found the art workshop very helpful. I was carrying a lot of pain but didn’t really realise how much - and a lot of burdens. I’m a poet and I share my pain through poetry. Although I knew that the creative arts could heal, I had never painted.

Through my involvement here I have realised that I want to help other women. This is my passion and this is what I want to be and what I want to do. The aim is to break the negative spirits that hold us. I am grateful for the workshop and what it has taught us. I have taken up drawing and painting as a hobby since,” she adds with a smile.



## The 1-in-9 Campaign

Campaign Coordinator Mpumi Mathabela and Judy Seidman, who heads up the Feminist Women's Art Network with a team from the AWDF during a site visit .

Johannesburg, South Africa.

