

## **A re-reading of Judges 19 in juxtaposition to the Zimbabwean women's vulnerability to 'punitive rape'**

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### **Abstract**

With the rise of feminist thinking, the phenomenon of the rape culture has admittedly drawn the attention of many academics especially in biblical studies. While several academics have done a commendable job of demonstrating how ancient biblical stories can have a bearing upon elements of the modern rape culture, the bulk of the literature has been penned from a Western standpoint and it is only by inference that one can find a resonance with the African situation. Given that the rape culture is not just a Western phenomenon but a pervasive global challenge, this article introduces an African perspective on this matter. Wearing feminist hermeneutical lenses, the article engages in a comparative analysis of the gender-based violations, human rights abuses, and the absolute lack of hospitality depicted in Judges 19–21 with the experiences of a Zimbabwean woman, Rutendo Munengami. It then taps into the lived experiences of the given women as resources which can be used to seriously think about the ugly dehumanising effects of rape and in so doing, bolster efforts towards combating the modern rape culture. In this article, it is our contention that people, the world over, and the Zimbabwean society in particular, need to earnestly acknowledge the pain and anguish experienced by the Levite's concubine as well as Munengami and other countless women who have been victims of rape. We conclude the article by restating that wherever the rape culture is prevalent, people need to embrace and uphold the principles of human dignity, hospitality, justice and equality, and resolutely move away from a culture of denial and apathy when it comes to issues of rape.

**Contribution:** This article juxtaposes the experiences of the sexual violence endured by the concubine in Judges 19 and that of a Zimbabwean woman, Rutendo Munengami. It concludes by proffering possible ways of curbing the rape culture which has crept into Africa like a cancerous worm.

**Keywords:** gender-based violence; Gibeon men; human rights abuses; Israelite tribes; punitive rape; texts of terror; theology of hospitality; Zimbabwean women.