

EXPLAIN¹

Hakima Abbas

To Eudy and Girly and all the sisters whose flame was cowardly extinguished but whose fire lights my soul.

You killed her.

How do I explain this to my child?
People hate that we love women
Their masculinity depends
on our non-existence.
Their whole being is so unsettled
By the mere idea
Of love, pleasure, sex, song and dance between women
Between men, between sheets, behind doors
You don't understand?
Baby, neither do I.

But, they killed her.
And I see the images of her partner,
Her mother, her people, weeping, mourning.
They killed her.
And I can't explain it.
We killed her.
And I just can't explain it.

Sisters scream STOP
The war on our bodies
STOP the violence.
And they are brave
And they are strong.
And they are beautiful.
In their fearlessness, I see vulnerability.
I see pain. I see Black Woman. That I want to keep safe.
And I am scared.
What will you tell my child when they come for me?

Together as men you raped, you killed a woman.
Is that your masculinity?
You proved it? You proved that you hide behind others.
You proved you are not man enough to think.
Not man enough to love.
Not man enough even to fight as equals.
You proved our brutality.
This made you a man, *my brother*?

YOU explain it to my child.
You who is silent.
You who doesn't like them but...
No, of course, you don't condone violence.
You who said it is unnatural.
You who just doesn't have an opinion.
You who thinks God will judge.
You who hides in your closet among our bones.
You who thinks that there are more important issues.
You who doesn't think that my life depends on it.
You who won't join the scream
STOP
And explain this to my child.

Note

1. I wrote this poem after my daughter asked me to explain the picture of Eudy Simelane's partner grieving outside court. Eudy (a South African lesbian) was gang raped, beaten and stabbed 25 times in the face, chest and legs. I didn't know how to explain why she was killed.

from: "African Sexualities: A Reader" (2011)
ed. Sylvia Tamale
Nairobi: Pambazuka Press.