

#AmINext is not a hashtag, it's the reality of life as a woman in South Africa

 By [Andy Walker](#)

3 Sep 2019

Late last week, South Africa was [harbouring hope](#) of finding missing 18-year-old UCT student Uyinenene Mrwetyana. She had disappeared on Saturday after leaving her residence in Claremont, Cape Town, to visit the post office. On Monday, all that hope, and the #BringNeneHome campaign that inspired it disintegrated.



Image credit: Matthew Henry on Unsplash.

News broke that a [42-year-old man confessed to killing and raping](#) Uyinenene Mrwetyana in a post office in Claremont, on the same block as a police station.

As the clock ticks over to 10pm on Monday evening, Twitter's a spider's web of hashtags highlighting the country's history of violent crimes against women. They're all dire. [#RIPUyinenene](#). [#EnoughIsEnough](#). [#SAShutdown](#).

But one stands out as the most appalling: #AmINext.

"The most stressful thing about [#AmINext](#) is that you could literally be next, it's not just a #, it's our sad reality and I'm fucken[sic] terrified," wrote one woman, as the hashtag began trending across the country on Monday.

It might be another hashtag, but it also represents the horrific reality of daily life for millions of women living in South Africa.

“ The most stressful thing about [#AmINext](#) is that you could literally be next, it's not just a #, it's our sad reality and I'm fucken terrified 🍷🍷🍷🍷🍷 —Bathong Christina (@_Queen_Fifi) [September 2, 2019](#) ”

Using it in similar fashion to [#MeToo in 2017](#), users recounted agonising experiences, expressed their hurt by “empty outrage”, and disappointment that nothing has changed in the last decade. South Africa remains one of the [most dangerous places in the world for women](#).

"Being a woman in South Africa is a death sentence," one user quotes.

Many feel the same way.

“ *I can't take uber.*

I can't go to campus.

I can't be out late or too early.

I can't be in a restaurant.

I can't be in a public space.

I can't be in a post office.

I can't be at work.

I can't be in a church.

I can't be in my own home.

I can't be in a park.

I can't be in a club.— SpuraMaluda (@sthebee) [September 2, 2019](#) ”

“ *The most stressful thing about [#AmINext](#) is that you could literally be next, it's not just a #, it's our sad reality and I'm fucken terrified* 🐼🐼🐼🐼🐼— Bathong Christina (@_Queen_Fifi) [September 2, 2019](#) ”

“ *[#UyineneMrwetyana](#) is not a stranger.*

She is me.

She is my sister.

She is my friend.

She is any of us.

We feel helpless and scared and tomorrow we are expected to move on and have this outrage another day when one of us goes missing. [#AmINext](#) ?— Buhle Lupindo (@Hlehle_Lupindo) [September 2, 2019](#) ”

If you're aimlessly scrolling through [#NotAllMen](#) tweets and wondering why women in South Africa feel this way:

In 2013, 17-year-old Anene Booysen was [gang raped and disembowelled](#) in Bredasdorp, Western Cape. She was still alive when she was found but died later in hospital six hours later.

Also in 2013, [Reeva Steenkamp](#) was shot and killed by her boyfriend in Johannesburg. Former Paralympic athlete Oscar Pistorius was [sentenced to more than a decade in prison](#) almost four years later.

In 2017, users took to Twitter in [hopes of finding Karabo Mokoena](#), a 22-year-old who went missing in Johannesburg. Her body was found burned. Her ex-boyfriend was later convicted of murder.

Last year, [a seven-year-old girl](#) was raped in a Pretoria restaurant. The 22-year-old man accused of raping her is set to [begin trial this month](#).

Earlier on Monday, [a Grade R girl was kidnapped](#) from her school in Vanderbijlpark, Gauteng. The kidnappers are now requesting a ransom of R2-million in exchange for the girl.

A day earlier, 14-year-old Janika Mallo was found dead, lying face down [in her grandmother's backyard](#). Her skull was struck by a "concrete block". The gruesome report by IOL suggested that she may have also been raped.

There are so many more stories of suffering.

Twitter users on Monday took the opportunity to highlight other missing persons across South Africa, using the trending hashtags.

“ Thando when missing last week friday 30 Aug 2019 in mamelodi...please help [#SAShutdown](#) [#PretoriaCBD](#) [#Tembisa](#) [pic.twitter.com/iRuamgLmn7](#)— Gabriel Tjabadi (@Gabriel_Tjabadi) [September 2, 2019](#) ”

“ [#SAShutdown](#)... Till today my friend and colleague was never found... Where is our police... [#EnoughIsEnough](#) [pic.twitter.com/alyMxGzBe2](#)— nicolamazibuko (@nikitahmazibuko) [September 2, 2019](#) ”

A number of protests are reportedly planned across South Africa this week, part of the #SAShutdown campaign [gaining momentum](#) on Twitter and Facebook.

Hashtags are powerful forces online. Issues in South Africa, in particular the #ZumaMustFall and #FeesMustFall campaigns, are just two examples of how [they've fuelled and fundamentally transformed activism](#) in the real world.

But #AmINext is more than just text on a screen or the beginnings of another protest movement.

It's a distressing, foreboding cloud of fear that hangs over women in this country every day. It's a conversation that has to be followed by tangible action. It should earmark the beginning of this 25-year-old country's attempt to fix itself.

“Am I next?” is a question that no woman should ever have to ask.

ABOUT ANDY WALKER

Camper by day, run-and-gunner by night, Andy is editor at Memeburn and prefers his toast like his coffee -- dark and crunchy. Specialising in spotting the next big Instagram cat star, Andy also dabbles in smartphone and game reviews over on Gearburn.

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