### Introduction

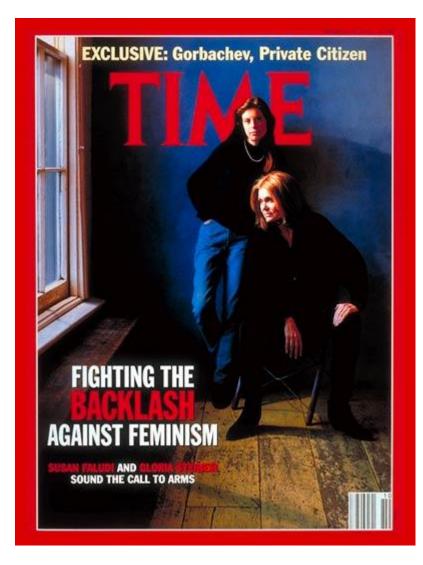
# Day 1

#### Module 2, *Feminism and Freedom* Tshisimani Centre for Activist Education

# Backlash – undeclared war on women

"a counterassault on women's rights...an attempt to retract the handful of small and hard-won victories that the feminist movement did manage to achieve for women"

Susan Faludi, 1991





#### Attack on Sexual and Reproductive Rights

Georgia, US bans abortion after 6 weeks of pregnancy ("the heartbeat bill")



Bolsonaro moves to delete all references to feminism, homosexuality, and violence against women from the nation's school textbooks.

#### Signs of the backlash

- Erosion of sexual and reproductive rights
- Re-asserting 'family values', natural order with men as superior and women and inferior
- Appeal to traditional gender roles
- Policy pronouncements and legislation
- Dismissing concerns about gendered violence

- A gendered expression of authoritarianism / the "strong men era" (Time Magazine)
- Politics of fear, regressive nostalgia and exclusion ("us and them")
- Use of the internet as a tool to censor, silence and surveil
- Use of democratic instruments as ticket to power followed by an attack on these instruments
- Growing insecurity fueled by the years of economic policies that called for budget cuts for social services



#### **Kenya bans Marie Stopes clinics**

Kenya bans Marie Stopes clinic from offering post abortion servicesAbortion is illegal in Kenya7 women die everyday from 'botched' abortions



#### **Uganda bans Pride marches**

Homosexuality is illegal in Uganda under colonial-era laws, punishable by a jail sentence

# Backlash or push for a breakthrough

- Caution against the reference to the 'backlash' in general terms
- Some of the freedoms that are being eroded in places like US are still to be won elsewhere
- Status of women & LGBTIQ reflect realities of living and struggling in 'partial democracies'

# Areas of agreement

- There is a big challenge to freedom in the world today
- There is a need to resist erosions to freedom
- Fight against the deliberate shrinking of spaces for freedom
- Strengthen the efforts of those who are struggling for a breakthrough under authoritarian regimes



What emancipatory ideas are at our disposal as we fight for freedom?

# **Three questions**

- 1. How does feminism help us to defend freedom?
- 2. How does feminism help us to expand notions and understandings of freedom?
- 3. In what ways does feminism give us insights that are neglected in other political traditions?