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The Escalation of Gender-based Violence during Lockdown as a Practical Theological Concern in the South African Context¹

By ME Baloyi²

Abstract

The year 2020 will be remembered as the year in which the coronavirus managed to disturb almost the entire planet from many of its activities. During the lockdown, which saw more than 195 countries in the world trying to combat the virus, gender-based violence in South Africa rose at an alarming rate. The skyrocketing statistics reported to police during this period raises a lot of concern as to why, instead of lockdown uniting families and marriages, reports of violence are on the rise. Aside from other factors that the research will unveil, theologically the church is not innocent of its patriarchal inequalities that were entrenched for many centuries now, hence the study will focus on the problem from a theological viewpoint. The traditions of subordinating and persecuting women and girls is a serious concern that cannot be neglected, especially during a time when people were supposed to make use of the lockdown to promote togetherness in their homes, instead of inflicting violence on women and children. It is the intention of this paper to investigate the possible reasons why women and children are the most targeted people for violence during this difficult time.

Keywords: Lockdown, Abuse, Marginalised, Oppression, Women, Children, Gender

Introduction

Experts fear that gender-based violence (GBV) towards women and children has been alarmingly increasing during the lockdown. Hlatshaneni (2020:2) reported that in just one week, the department of social development received over 2000 calls to its hotline regarding this kind of violence. Although violence against women and children has been common in the country for some time, this escalation of its statistics is very abnormal, leading many to wonder why these numbers rose during these trying times. It is questionable if the country will manage to rid both Covid-19 and GBV simultaneously.

Siya Tsewu (2020) gives more explanations of what Minister of Police Beki Cele has already announced. Ncube (2020) says, "Men are mostly stressed and anxious because of economic uncertainty and women find themselves at the receiving end of these heightened emotions and violence." To add to this argument, the job losses in which the majority of men are

¹ This article is a reworked version of the paper delivered in the 2nd International RIT Vimarsh Conference entitled: "Gender and Violence" that took place between 09 and 10 October 2015 in Hotel Crown Plaza, New Delhi, India. The initial title of the paper was: "Re-reading the phrase "Women and children not counted" in Matt 14:21 in a South African women and child abusive violence context."

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a part of cannot be ignored. Men's unfaithfulness can also be exposed more when they are in the house for longer periods than they used to be; hence, they may vent their anger on their wives and children.

According to Sonke Gender Justice (2020):

The current Covid-19 pandemic is a major gender and inequity challenge at various levels of society, including in the home. Many governments have ordered lockdowns – citizens are urged to stay in their homes to limit the spread of the virus. With this arrangement, however, the threat of gender-based violence lurks around and the burden of care work in households will be a heavy burden carried by women and girls, creating stress and anxiety that could make them susceptible to disease. In order to win against the pandemic, there needs to be empathy, co-operation and peaceful relations in households – and men and boys can contribute to this. Leaders of five of our 22 MenEngage Africa networks share how men and boys can help make the international effort to curb the spread of Covid-19 a reality.

COVID-19 threatens women's and girls' well-being, and men and boys must come on board and fight this issue.

It is the intention of this article to argue, amongst other things, that instead of the lockdown being used to subject and terrorise women and children, it should be used for looking at ways in which families can strengthen their bonds. As this study was completed during a time of lockdown, it was not easy to find a lot of study material or use any other empirical method to make this study; newspapers, television, and radio news are the main form of sources of reading that are available at this time.

Theoretical Argument, Relevance of the Study, and its Methodological Considerations

Even before the lockdown, South Africa was characterised by inequalities, including gender inequality. Mucherera and Lartey (2017,65) assert that women in many parts of the continent do not have equal rights in society and are often treated as second-class citizens. Baloyi (2012) confirms that women killings and other forms of gender-based violations are still troubling the South African community, despite the fact that the constitution protects everyone's rights, women and children included. The arrival of the coronavirus, which forced the country into lockdown, led to the rapid escalation of gender-based violence. The relevance of this study is based on the fact that the lockdown was supposed to be the opportunity for the family to enjoy togetherness, but the direct opposite is happening in many families. Although South Africa is the context in which the study is executed, some relevant material within Africa and beyond will not be undermined in this study so that the country will not be isolated from the similar challenges that are faced in the African continent and abroad.

Though other sociological disciplines have raised their concerns about GBV escalation, it is important to the author of this article to ensure that theology also be included in this challenge. This paper argues that the correct practical theology must address the people from their own immediate situations, or else it ceases to exist (Cone, 1986,43). The rightful place for theology and theologians is in the marginalised, oppressed, and exploited parts of the population (Gatwa, 2010,32). Chitando (cited in Amanze, 2012,6) also shares Cone's sentiments; they articulate that teaching theology that does not refer to existential, contemporary issues faced by men, women,

and children on the African continent minimises the relevance of the discipline subject-specific literature like newspapers, books, television, and radio news, and other media sources will be used to get the information to write this research. This argument is in agreement with Mngomezulu (2014,7) in articulating that child and woman abuse is one of the scourges of our society.

Background

The plight of women and children abuse is a continuous, serious concern in South Africa, and it has become particularly concerning during the lockdown. There are many factors attributed to this increase, including patriarchal perceptions. It is for that reason the author is in agreement with Masenya when it comes to the notion that even in a post-apartheid South Africa, a black woman will still remain a victim of oppressive forces for the coming generations (Masenya, 1995,149). She preferred to call women who engage with liberation issues “womanists” instead of “feminists.” Her re-reading of the proverbs exposes how patriarchy, even in the Bible, became a powerful tool to oppress women. This paper will attempt to expose the background of women’s subjection and suffering by the hands of males by citing a few examples in which brutality towards them was demonstrated in this country, even before the lockdown. The author’s argument is that the current GBV escalations cannot be isolated from the common and previous practices of similar offences that took place in the past. The only difference is that we are currently in lockdown, but the similar offences must be traced to the past. For instance, the title “Suffer little kids” summarised the story of the dragging of a four-year-old boy to death in a moving car, while the kidnapping of another six-year-old boy on South African soil was mentioned by Motumi (2014) and Makhetha (2014). In another incident, a father poisoned his own twins in Dududza, Gauteng, after threatening to kill the children a few times beforehand (Moagi 2014,3). One man was caught and beaten by onlookers for assaulting a woman in a car at Mayibuye Road, Braamfischer in Soweto (Moagi 2014,3). Echoing Nxesi’s statement, Gauteng Community Safety’s Faith Mazibuko on Reeva Steenkamp’s commemoration said: “We will accept this memorandum and make sure that the criminal justice system brings all perpetrators to book. It can’t be right, after twenty years of democracy, that women are still living as slaves, and women’s rights are still not treated as equal rights” (Mazibuko, 2014,10). She said this when receiving a memorandum from women who were marching to the Pretoria Supreme Court on Valentine’s Day to commemorate the first anniversary of Reeva’s death. Reeva Steenkamp was gunned to death by her boyfriend, the popular blade runner Oscar Pistorius (Mashego 2014,6). Although this case is still in court, the emotions it raised among gender activists and other stakeholders still run high throughout South Africa. The author of this paper’s reason for listing these few incidents is simply to indicate that the problem of GBV is not new to South African, it is just concerning that it is growing faster during lockdown.

Sibiya and Mngomezulu (2014,4) in their article entitled “Mum and child killed” gave a dreadful detailed report which clearly depicts how women in South Africa continue to be objects of men’s anger in the hands of their husbands and boyfriends. The first case study is that of a woman who was killed in Mndeni, Soweto on the night of 6 June 2014. Looking at the situation in which South African women and children find themselves, one can clearly believe that the battle for gender equality is still far from being over. This indicates that very slow transformation is taking place with regard to gender balances, and hence, theology must play a role. This is a reminder of the incident that once took place in Kliptown in Soweto, where more than 200 women marched through the streets carrying a poster that said “Real men protect women and children” in capital letters. These women were not only in the streets, but they also went from door to door,

spreading awareness and even teaching women and children to be vocal and report forms of abuse in their lives (Mogotsi 2014,4). This incident reminds us that one of the most worrying factors in South Africa is the growing neglect and abuse of women and children. In August 2015, one of South Africa's parliamentarian ministers, Thulas Nxesi, stated that after 20 years of democracy there are still many areas of life, particularly in the economy, where women remain underrepresented. In South Africa, August is a month selected to celebrate their worth in the society, concentrate on women's rights, their challenges as well as their achievements, hence Thulas Nxesi was addressing those who attended one of those August celebrations. The struggle for gender equality was far from over (Ramutla 2015,4).

In another incident, the Sonke Gender Justice was successful in the prosecution of a man who abducted and raped a girl in the name of '*ukuthwala*' traditional practice (Maluleke, 2015,5). According to Maluleke (2015,5) *ukuthwala* is a form of abduction which involves a man and his friends/peers kidnapping a young girl or woman with the intention of compelling the girl or a young woman's family to endorse marriage negotiations. One man reduced his ten-year-old daughter's value to R50 in beer by selling the daughter for sex in Mpumalanga. This incident was repeated many times before the perpetrators were arrested. It is also suspected that the girl's mother knew about the incident but did not report it to the police (Mashaba 2014,2).

The patriarchal society in which we find ourselves has used idioms, culture, and religion to continue ensuring that women remain secondary citizens. Because of gender imbalances, Le Roux (2009) argued that the South African Broadcasting Corporation should respect the allocated times for the screening of sexual matters, which end up representing women as mere sexual beings. In his article headlined: "The use of Imago Dei as a pastoral healing vision against women killings in SA", Baloyi (2011,5) argued that women are regarded by many traditional men as less than human in our country. Even though there are no statistics produced to support this, as this is not the focus of the study, the escalation of both the abuse and killing of women by their husbands has been confirmed by the Ministry for Women, Children and People with Disabilities according to Khumalo (2011,5). These are a few examples of how women and children are reduced to mere objects of war between men and women (Khumalo 2011,5).

It is still very important to notice that within the context in which South Africa, like many other countries in the world, finds itself during the coronavirus pandemic, one would expect that every person's concentration would be occupied by this deadly virus and that men would protect the women and children in their families more than ever before. The commission on gender equality and many other stakeholders who engage in the gender issues of the country are seriously affected by the reports of women's abuse in these frustrating times. Baloyi of Gender Commission (in Hans, 2020), pre-empted that during the lockdown the commission was also expecting a difficult period with an increase of emotional, psychological and verbal abuse.

According to Baloyi (2016,4), most African traditionalists believe that "many husbands expect women to have a sense of self-control and discipline, while they themselves can live as they wish, without self-control or discipline." This one-sided kind of expectation is not only undermining women, but can also be very dangerous because it gives reasons to abuse and violate their rights.

The author is reminded of the organisations including Sonke Gender Justice and Commission of Gender Equality, which became very critical of an address that forbade men to bring their wives when attending the South African Traditional Music Awards in the Eastern Cape. The address given by the MEC for Sports, Recreation and Culture, Pemmy Majodina, went as follows: "Leave your Tupperwares behind. I am sure you know Eastern Cape women are very

beautiful. You must leave your partners behind (Nteyi 2014,3).” There are several reasons why this address is disturbing, particularly when coming from an honourable person who should be trying to help people realise their worth. Firstly, whether the MEC was making a joke or not, this speech creates confusion for our young women who might understand this as the way they should go. Secondly, this does not only reduce women to mere objects to please men, but it reduces their humanity and worth. Thirdly, if women or wives are referred to as Tupperware, it means they are equated with property and their value drops, which promotes the patriarchal thinking that sees women’s value as that of property in the home, hence the escalation of their calamities during lockdown. It potentially makes women vulnerable in the face of abusive men who are viewing lockdown as a challenge instead of a time to be with their families. This address agrees very well with the Tsonga saying: “*Wanhwana I huku yo khomela vayeni* (Moleko 2012,4)” (literally meaning: a girl is a chicken reserved for visitors).

This objectification of women was exemplified in another shocking violent occurrence; a woman was put in the boot of a car while her boyfriend was trying to smuggle her out of Gauteng to Mpumalanga, only to get caught in a highway roadblock. It can be inferred that this was a consensual agreement, but how can a woman allow herself to be reduced to the level of being put into the boot, where traditionally groceries are put? People’s interpretations of this story may vary, but some might see the woman accepting being put in the boot as her being reduced to an object, existing in a space where luggage is usually stored (Mlambo 2020,4).

Abuse and violence against women is not new, it is exemplified even in Biblical stories. Sometimes fathers were found to be violent to their own daughters, hence the violence against women and children is a fitting discussion. The example is from the re-reading of Judges 19, where a father and protector of the family was ready to offer his daughter to please strangers (Masenya, 2005,193). This is just what Baloyi’s (2012,3) article entitled “Women as sexual objects” is trying to argue. This kind of address may, in a sense, fuel extra-marital relationships and men luring young girls into sex, which has already been showed to have unprecedented and unwanted results in our communities. Treating women as objects did not stop with ancient Jewish society but went on to reach our own country with its respective communities. The conditions in which women and children find themselves in in South Africa can be typified by, amongst other things, one of the newspaper articles entitled “Society needs to end child abuse” (Ariae 2014,12). In this article, the author argues for and indicates the urgency of dealing with the abuse of women and children by arguing that the brutal treatment of women and children is deeply rooted in the fabric of our entire society. There is enough evidence to prove that, as a result of the lockdown, frustrations and desperations manifest themselves in outcomes like violations of other people’s human rights. (Smillie, Ajam and Bega 2020,1).

Possible Realities of the Gender-Based Violence During Lockdown

This section will begin with a quote from President Ramaphosa. He stated: “It is disturbing that during the time of such immense difficulty for our country, women and girls are being terrorised inside their own homes, forcing them to make desperate calls for help.” (Timeslive, from Sowetan, 14 April 2020, page 4). According to Unathi Kanjeni (2020), the president’s concern received an echo from reigning Miss Universe and gender-based violence (GBV) activist Zozi Tunz, who has since expressed her heartbreak over the recent alarming number of GBV cases reported during the first week of lockdown. It was only seven days into lockdown when the police reports indicated that more than 87,000 GBV related complaints were reported.

Vilakazi (2020,4) reported two men, aged 24 and 27 respectively, who burst in Sweetwaters, Pietermaritzburg for raping a 74-year-old woman, while a 20-year-old woman was also raped in Pietermaritzburg during the lockdown. I agree with William Gumede (2020,18) who acknowledges that the lockdown has been effective in slowing down the spread of the virus, but the confinement exposed the explosions of the violence against women and children at an alarming rate too Gumede William (2020). Marupeng, in his report entitled “Mom fights in vain to stop her daughter’s murder” explained how Nolundi, was shot in the head by an ex-boyfriend while she was trying to break up with him in Katshehlong. This happened after a meeting with parents was held to try to end the abusive relationship. Nolundi was followed by this man into their backroom, and then their fight moved to the street where he shot her and then himself (Marupeng 2020,2).

The Citizen reporter (2020) expressed that Minister of Police, Beki Cele also indicated his concern about the escalation of gender-based violence:

Cele added, he noted with concern the possibility in an increase in GBV-related incidents when the national lockdown was announced. At the time, Cele urged the reinforcement of the family violence, child protection and sexual offences (FCS) units. Over 2,300 calls and complaints have been received since the beginning of lockdown until 31 March. 148 suspects have been charged with inflicting gender-based violence.

Andrea Corthia (2020), in his blog entitled “Lockdown: 87,000 cases of gender-based violence” reported more than 17,000 arrests made during lockdown.

The police minister, besides delivering the shocking gender-based violence statistics, also announced that about 2,298 arrests had been made. Some South Africans took this as the total national number. However, it was only the number for one day: March 30th. Minister Cele later confirmed that the national number of arrests were more than 17,000 in South Africa. Provincially they are as follows:

- Gauteng – 1,888
- KwaZulu Natal – 1,845
- Eastern Cape – 1,613
- Northern Cape – 832
- North West – 1,562
- Free State – 3,098
- Mpumalanga – 752
- Limpopo – 850
- Total – 17,209

These statistics refer only to the lockdown time and one need not undermine the fact that one province which has the highest is omitted in this list. The most worrying factor is that these escalations come at a time in which the government is very stretched to combat the spread of the virus, which makes it even more difficult for its resources to fight both battles at the same time. Another point is that during the lockdown it is not as easy to identify signs of abuse and harassment as everyone is abiding by lockdown rules and concentrating on their own challenges. Perhaps this is an area in which the perpetrators are advantaged since it is difficult to have people with evidence against them. The author of this article understands and supports Makhetha (2020,2) who said that

the lockdown did not stop gender-based violence as it is still high. There is a high possibility that fears of possible lack of income and job losses versus the fear of the virus accompany other causes of the growth in GBV (News24,2020).

Homes as Places of Abuse

There is a considerable amount of evidence that homes, instead of being places of safety and security, are places where gender-based violence is rooted. The mere fact that the escalation of this kind of violence, amongst others, while people are locked down in their homes due to the coronavirus challenge shows that husbands and wives must rethink their family dynamics and be open to responding to change, to moving forward. GBV can happen and had been happening outside the home, inflicted even by strangers, for the sake of this research, the home is the focal point. According to South African GBV report conducted under the Embassy of Finland: “Cultural, religious, social and economic factors play a role in driving GBV (GBV, 2016).”

Isabel Phiri (2007, 12) quoted one Malawian woman complaining:

My friends, do you see it? In our own village, where we are women, when plans are made or discussed for the good of the people. It is men inside the kraal, women are out. Now here in the church we are brought inside. We have been given a place to do the work in the kingdom of God. Here in the church we are people.

Phiri’s (2007, 12) response to this quote is very appropriate when she argued that to be a person means that you have a say in what is happening around you, you are involved in the discussions that involve you.

The lockdown GBV is proof that most abuse and oppression of women and children takes place in the home, where support and protection was supposed to be ensured. Traditional men or husbands use the territory called “home” to justify their unquestionable authorities towards women. Motsei (2007, 4) is correct in arguing that it is in the home that some of the most brutal forms of violence and torture are perpetrated against those perceived to be weak, namely, women and children. In her lecture entitled “The rights of women and Christian marriage” which she delivered in 1915 in Freetown, Casely Hayford (in Blain), a renowned Pan Africanist feminist theologian from Sierra Leone, indicated that education would be the tool to improve African women from male supremacy even in the home situation (Blain 1986, 45).

One of the forms of women oppression in many African homes, according to Siwila (2015,61), is that of associating and attaching the importance of biological reproduction to women. Speaking of another common cause of women’s abuse, infertility, Mercy Oduyoye explains that childlessness does not only dehumanize barren women, but it is also a taboo which cannot be accommodated in the society (2015,6). There might not be a record of such cases during lockdown, but that does not mean that this is not happening to women right now. Mercy Oduyoye (2015,6) vividly explained her own pain of the journey of her childlessness in her “Coming home to myself.” Kanyoro (2002,34) is correct in arguing that since the value attached to the cultural ideologies and practices were used as tools to justify women oppression, questioning and scrutinizing the same practices can help balance gender inequalities (Kanyoro,2002:24). Baloyi’s (2013) article on menopause also indicates how reduced women are after the childbearing period.

Theology of Liberation (Afflict the Oppressor in Supporting the Oppressed)

Cone's (1982,43) idea of "afflicting the oppressor in support of the oppressed" is also applicable in this violent context. This means that men who undermine or dominate women and children must be addressed and warned very strongly. The government, in support of the constitution, in order to eliminate any kind of gender related domination, should apply harsh measures against the culprits. For Isabel Phiri and the author of this article, it was the experience of the Gospel as a tool of colonialism, racism, sexism, classism, and exclusivism that led to the emergence of African liberation as a protest against those inequalities (Phiri 2004,16).

The abduction, killings, battering, rape, and physical violence against women and children on this continent, which is perpetrated by patriarchy, needs pastors and other leaders in the community to become the voice of the voiceless women and children. James Cone says you need to afflict the oppressor when helping the oppressed. Children need male figures to be their protectors rather than abusers. These people deserve harsher punishment than they receive now. Rapabi (2014, 14) is absolutely correct in advising men to cherish, love, and respect women, just as they expect women to respect them in turn. Instead of treating them with contempt and dehumanising them, men need to regard them as an equal creation of God. Our democracy also advocates and advances the rights and status of women, and hence, domestic violence is also regarded as a human rights offence. Just as Tshingilane (2014, 13) argued, we all need to uphold the importance of culture and tradition, but not at the expense of women and children. This kind of view is echoed by Araie (2014, 12) who states that it is society—all of us—who need to end the abuse of children and women. In other words, people cannot simply wait for the Commission on Gender alone to uproot gender related issues; It needs to start right from ourselves as individuals. The author is in agreement with Phiri that Jesus had been on the side of women in their oppression. Many women circles were formed to expose patriarchal imbalances (Phiri 2004, 22). According to Julius Gathogo, Jesus Christ became a liberator of women since he is portrayed as the one who midwives the birth of the new society, in which both males and females are seen as equals (Gathogo 2008, 76). Exclusion of women is just a direct contrast to Jesus, who declared: "I have come to set captives free, to give sight to the blind, wholeness to the lame and to proclaim Good news (Luke 4:18-20)."

In the book "The will to arise", Mercy Oduyoye and Musimbi Kanyoro are very clear in stating that theology can and must help in the struggle for emancipation of women and justice (Oduyoye 1992, 43). The use of both culture and religion to subordinate women can be salvageable if theology comes to give its support for women. This is what Hinga (1990, 40) supported in her 'Jesus Christ and liberation of women in Africa.' There is a general agreement between African women theologians like Anne Namisiyu-Wasike, Mercy Oduyoye, Isabel Phiri, Musimbi Kanyoro, Teresa Hinga, and many others that Jesus represents the overthrow of the present world system of gender inequality; He stood for the struggle of equality. In reclaiming their subjective positions, African women have to fight against patriarchy in their traditions and legacy of colonialist feminism.

There is still a great need of liberation theology³ to liberate African men from their perspectives and opinions on gender related issues. It is men in particular who can play a significant role in liberating themselves as well as women and children. The theology of Jesus

³ Liberation theology has its roots in Latin America from the mid-1950s as a theological reaction against the socio-economic development that pushed peasant workers and farming populations into desperate poverty. It is relevant in the African-South African context because the level of inequalities were perpetrated, amongst other factors, by racism, colonialism, and apartheid.

Christ is also a learning curve in liberating women; for example, the reading of John 4:27 could be used. The church should use this kind of passage to teach and indicate that women are also an important part of the inner circle of the church. Even though it amazed His disciples, Jesus did not stop talking to a woman in John 4:27⁴. They were astonished, but not one of them asked why Jesus was speaking to this woman. This, amongst other passages, indicates how Jesus Himself crossed the cultural barriers which entrenched women into oppression and abuse. He treated women as equal to men. In Mark 8, the author did not hesitate to mention the names of women who became part of the inner circle of Jesus' ministry. Some of them became the first witnesses of the resurrection on the graveside, while men were still hiding in fear of the Roman soldiers. The role and the rights of women and children have to be taken into account in ways that they were not in the Victorian society. People can learn from Jesus' theology and attitude towards women, even in the restricted society of His day.

Counselling

Some NGOs opened up online counselling, which can be helpful during lockdown. It is important that women and children report these cases and seek assistance since getting out to police will not be helpful during these challenging times. There is a WhatsApp line that was opened by the beer brand company Black Label to support such victims online. Its director, Arne Rust, who can be reached at 0800150150, indicated that they do assist both afflicted women and the afflicting husbands by putting someone like a mentor to assist them in their struggles (Makheta 2020, 2). According to News24 (2020) Wire, there is also the Thuthuzela Care Centre which is working towards being COVID-19 safe for victims to access without fear of contamination.

This is a challenge to pastoral care and counselling that must ensure that family problems and challenges are attended to. Pastoral caregivers need to work hand in hand with the communities to ensure the safety of women in their respective homes. Neighbourhoods must be encouraged to be quick to inform pastors, social workers, and police about any suspicions of fights or abuse in their respective areas. It is Baloyi and Manala's (2013, 6) strong conviction that the church, amongst other sectors, should head the fight against the gender imbalances, without the least reservation. Church's methods include preaching, pastoral caregiving, as well as other community engagements in which the church is given an active role. It is often found that couples whose tendencies are abusive did not receive premarital counselling, which would help them to understand how to handle difficulties that are encountered when people are living as husband and wife. In cases like those, post-marital counselling can be recommended. Bodies like FAMSA have a very important role to play in many families, even during the lockdown. This will avoid possible divorces as well as stress related illnesses that may be encountered after the lockdown.

Conclusion

The abuse and killings of women and children have been escalating, and that is evident from many reports as availed in this research. It is important not only to voice that women deserve shelter and protection during the lockdown, but also to take action to ensure that this assistance becomes a reality. Not only must women protect themselves, but men too must stand out and be

⁴ This is paraphrased from the Biblical story in which the disciples return from buying food, to find Jesus speaking to a Samaritan woman in the well. It was strange in Jewish custom for a male person to speak a woman who is not his wife in public, hence the reaction of the disciples.

against any form or sign of any abuse. The South African government and some of its NGO's had been in the battle to balance genders, but it is important to see the role and the influence of the church through its theology in this regard. Women and children's rights must be upheld and protected. The author ends this article by quoting Mercy Oduyoye:

Feminism is then an emphasis on the wholeness of the human community as made up of beings some of whom are males and other females. It seeks to express what is not so obvious that is, male-humanity has a partner in female-humanity and that both expressions of humanity are needed to shape a balanced community within which each will experience a fullness of Being (Oduyoye 1982, 193).

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