

“My Voice for the Woman and Children are Voiceless”

By Anastacia Brand

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As we move closer to gender-based violence (GBV) awareness month near the end of November 2024, yet another year is passing and it seems we are losing more and more voices. We are suffocating and we are in tears, the number reported cases of women and children is ever-growing. There is still no end to this fast-growing pandemic, no solution in sight to this terrible crime.

In an interview with a woman named Cherry, with her daughter Keisha both from Eden Park, east of Johannesburg, we discussed GBV in her area, Eden Park, which according to her is a small community plagued with gang violence, substance abuse, and a lack of safety and security services.

Cherry says they face one other form of violence, or another, all the time in their community, whether that is abuse against women, children and the elderly, or sexual assault, the root reason for it is substance abuse. The community member emphasised how children being brought up through violence within the home and abnormal upbringing leads to these special issues.

She spoke about an incident that took place nearly a decade ago, a friend of hers, during a visit, a raging boy started demanding money from her. The boy attacked her, Cherry said, it was not the first time he beat her up, he even allegedly stabbed his sister-in-law and ended up in a correctional facility, which seemed to have helped correct him after his release. She says that this case is one of many GBV cases that are reported by many.

Cherry says even though this has not happened to her directly she still feels affected by it as a member of the community because it is an issue that also affects everyone indirectly.

On whether she feels enough is being done by the law to ensure the safety of the community, she feels more can be done but intervention should start at the root of the problem to resolve it. She thinks it should start at home, children raised in violent circumstances, homes with substance abuse, should be raised in a different environment.

Thaba, another community member, says he has never raised his hand on a woman but knows a woman he was dating who had been a victim in the past. Thaba tells a story set about a month ago. He and a lady went out for drinks, out of nowhere a man came and started handling of the lady very violently. The assailant started to lift her, Thaba said he was scared and did not want to get involved in a “love triangle situation”, he stepped back. He says the only reason he did was because of fear and because most of the time woman only ends up going back to the very same abuser.

Both these two individuals, the experience of abuse in their surrounding no hope because of injustice with the justice system embarrassment, or fear of reporting

because regardless of what happened the victim always goes back, sometimes due to dependence or no hope of ever finding the proper help needed.

As a community who lives in fear you ask yourself a question who do you turn to for help when even the justice system itself is failing us and for years and years there's the same awareness programs organisations such as Powa but we still do not get enough assistance even after coming out of the program there are still reports every two minutes in our communities and in our country on a daily of deaths of women and children due to gender base violence.

The law is still failing us years later because no matter how much you cry out for help the ones in power have the loudest voices then the powerless and we still have no solution of how to stop gender-based violence in our community. And I personally feel communication within the justice system plays the biggest role to the never-ending problem.

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