

## **Ending Complicity and Protecting our dreams**

*Being a voice for the voiceless – written by survivors of sexual violence in KwaZulu Natal*

The Gospel of Jesus Christ Compels us to Promote a Culture of Nonviolence

- ⦿ Like Tamar thousands of years ago as survivors we have been forced to keep quiet and live a life as desolate women.
- ⦿ Are there women like Tamar in your church and/or community?
- ⦿ What resources are there in your community/church for survivors of rape?

I am a survivor and in solidarity I have spent this last week listening to survivors telling their stories of being raped by the police, the pastor, the husband the teacher ,the neighbor, the father, the grandfather the uncle the boss the son, the grandson and in all these stories it's hard to believe that no one knew, someone should have helped and someone could have helped. WE are survivors to a culture in which the perpetrators are treated more humane than the survivors of violent sexual assaults.

"The rape culture – which includes the harassment and blaming of victims — deters victims from reporting sexual assault and encourages men and boys to rape. When a victim is raped, too often the response is to ask what she or he could have done to prevent the crime. Instead, we must demand that rapists stop raping, and we must change the culture that views rape as inevitable.

"Sexual violence, especially when tolerated or even justified, threatens not only women's lives but also those of the communities in which we live.

All of us :

- were raped and assaulted
- have survived and shown amazing resilience

Even though we continue to live with the trauma and stigma of rape and there are thousands like us out there.

We are here today to ask for your assistance to end the complicity because if you are silent you are part of the problem. We are here to speak about xenophobia against women who have been raped and chased away in our police stations and shelters because of their immigration status and in all these cases someone witnessed this and was silent.

It might not be happening to you or your loved one today but as a church leader as a father and a mother you have a responsibility to speak out against violence. Churches should be our sanctuary, pastors need to speak out from the pulpit and teachers need to speak out in classes about rape if they have been abused let them be free to talk without shame. Police should be our protectors not our violators but we are scared of them. Where should we go? To whom should we turn to?

**Silence is the enemy of change.** We are here to plead with you to speak out even if we are poor we are still human beings. For the most part, the complicity of the churches and the leaders in sexual violence is a complicity of silence. The majority of church leaders and the rest of our communities know almost nothing about the dynamics of sexual and family violence and have little or no experience in dealing with it.

We are here to bring attention to the real challenges facing women, especially low-income women, living in poverty and the unemployed. We are seeking policy changes that will address these challenges, To encourage survivor participation, in developing and implementing policies and other initiatives in the fight against sexual exploitation and sexual abuse in our communities. The protection of survivors and respect for their rights, responding to their views, needs and concerns. Survivor friendly investigative and judicial procedures, where they are well protected and well supported.

Church leaders, gender advocates and everyone in here whether it's a colleague, friend or family member, I am sure you know someone who has been affected by sexual abuse. Each of us in this room has a role to play in breaking the silence and supporting solutions. Preventing sexual abuse is within your power and survivors we are working to provide information, education and resources to keep women and children safe. We need your support and your blessing in building the survivors collective power to realize a nation of justice for all.

Help us to:

- to raise public awareness on the extent of sexual violence within our circle of trust, how to empower survivors to break the silence and to find the ways to prevent and report sexual abuse .
- raise awareness that sexual violence against children is ***preventable***. To convince government to invest in resources as prevention is the most effective means to reduce violence within our communities.
- To realise our dreams through programs and interventions that would support us to create sustainable livelihood
- To return to school and pursue our studies once again (those survivors who were disturbed while schooling)

We invite you all to support us today because we are committed. We are motivated. And we will not stop. Not until all survivors enjoy true equality, equity and opportunity. We thank you for listening!