

Activism against abuse should be personal

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“It is time for all of us to act like activists and stop the silence surrounding violence against women and children,” says Henda van der Merwe, director of CMR Gauteng East.

“Abusers should be reported and be made to own up to their unacceptable behaviour. We must stop protecting them by remaining silent. Crime statistics hardly ever shows a downward trend and considering that in a three-month period this year, 65 women were murdered in South Africa and another 122 almost killed in attempted murders; nothing about abuse is acceptable. Not even that which seems innocuous, like incessant teasing.”

Gender violence starts in the home – or a relationship. Women should learn to identify abusive behaviour right from the start of a relationship – and walk away. “Let us take note that 1 758 protection orders were served from April to June this year in Gauteng alone. Usually by the time a woman gets to this point the partner abuse has been ongoing for a long time – most probably years.

“Community members should remember that silence implies complicity... and that abuse is a crime. But be careful,” she cautions. Reach out to the victim first, if possible. Be supportive and sensitive. Try to discuss the problem – but most of all, listen. Do not be scared to reach out and help someone in distress. We should care enough to become part of the solution.

“It is important to teach children gender roles, and that it does not mean submission of one partner to the other, but rather equality of respect and treatment by others. Part of this would be to take measures to protect children from harmful influences by the media – television, social media and in particular, porn sites on the internet accessible from their cellphones.

Van der Merwe concludes that there is a myriad of causes and contributory factors, among them socio-economic factors notably unemployment, that play a role in gender abuse. The greatest factor is probably gender roles – in many cultures the woman is seen as having to submit. “But even this does not excuse abuse,” she says.

Ends

Aktivisme teen geweld: ‘n Persoonlike saak

“Dit het tyd geword dat almal van ons soos aktiviste optree en die stilte rondom die geweld teen vroue en kinders verbreek,” sê Henda van der Merwe, direkteur van CMR Gauteng Oos.

Geweldenaars moet aangekla word en gedwing word om vir hul onaanvaarbare gedrag aanspreeklik gehou te word. Ons moet ophou om hul te beskerm deur ons stilte. Misdaadstatistiek toon selde ‘n afname en as ons in ag neem dat in ‘n drie-maande periode hierdie jaar, 65 vroue in Suid-Afrika vermoor is en nog 122 in poging tot moord beseer is; kan ons verklaar dat niks omtrent geweld aanvaarbaar is nie. Nie eens dit wat skynbaar skadeloos is, soos onophoudelike terger, behoort geduld te word nie.”

Gendergeweld begin in die huis – of in die verhouding. Vroue moet leer om geweldenaars van die begin van ‘n verhouding af te identifiseer – en om te draai en weg te loop van so ‘n persoon. “In Gauteng is daar hierdie jaar tussen April en Junie 1 758 beskermingsbevele uitgereik. Teen die tyd wat ‘n vrou hierdie punt bereik – om die reg te nader om beskerming – het die geweld reeds ‘n hoogtepunt bereik – en gaan dit reeds lank aan – dalk jare.

“Gemeenskappe moet onthou dat stilte beteken hul is deel van die geweld – en dat geweld ‘n kriminele oortreding is. Maar wees versigtig”, waarsku sy. “Probeer om eers die slagoffer te nader. Bied ondersteuning aan op ‘n sensitiewe manier. Probeer om die problem te bespreek – maar luister veral. Moenie bang wees om uit te reik en iemand te help wat hulp nodig het nie. Ons behoort genoeg om te gee om deel van die oplossing te wees.

“Dit is belangrik dat kinders genderrolle geleer behoort te word, en dat verskillende rolle nie ondergeskiktheid beteken nie, maar wel wedersydse respek. Om kinders teen die nadelige effekte van die media te beskerm (televisie, sosiale media and veral pornografie op die internet wat van selfone af bereik word), behoort deel hiervan te wees.

Van der Merwe sluit af deur uit te wys dat daar ‘n legio oorsake en bydraende faktore is, onder andere ook sosio-ekonomiese faktore soos werkloosheid, wat ‘n rol in gendergeweld speel. Die grootste faktor is sekerlik genderrolle – in baie kulture word vroue as ondergeskik gesien. “Maar dit maak nie geweld teen vroue aanvaarbaar nie,” sê sy.

Einde