

**16
Women
Tell
16
Life
Stories**

New World Foundation



building a new world of hope,
justice and peace



Sixteen women from Lavender Hill share stories on violence, abuse, courage, survival and personal growth as a contribution to *16 Days of Activism Against Violence Against Women and Children 2011*

The New World Foundation compiled this collection of life stories from interviews with sixteen women from Lavender Hill and surrounding communities. The transcripts from interviews were shortened and slightly edited. To the best of our knowledge, the stories are true. All sixteen women have given their permission for the publication of their life stories in this booklet and on our website (www.newworldfoundation.org.za). Because of the sensitive content of the stories; some of the women have chosen to remain anonymous.

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Foreword - Healing through Story Telling

The "16 women tell 16 life stories" is a compilation written by New World Foundation for the 16 Days of Activism Against Violence Against Women and Children, 2011. The 16 women who were selected to tell their stories are from the Lavender Hill area, Cape Town, an area notorious for gang violence and drug addiction. The women and children of this community unfortunately have had to bear the brunt of this violence which also allowed a culture of violence to penetrate throughout the community including people's homes and the children's playing fields. So one can imagine the amount of healing needed amongst these brave 16 women.

These women have been brave enough to use the medium of storytelling to tell their stories to a writer who then compiled the stories for this printed anthology. It was not so easy for them, drawing up all that pain and history of violence, some of which they still currently experience. Some have instructed to remain anonymous for potential further victimization in either the community or in their home with the latter being more prevalent. Many also asked for some of the details in the stories to be eliminated. Germaine Greer's theory "the personal is political" still rings true even until today after very progressive laws and policies have been passed worldwide to protect our marginalized groups.

The 16 selected women have been failed by our country, our society, the community, and some even by their own families in many ways. This has led to even further and deeper trauma that affects and penetrates the rest of the community and its families. Theorist Martha Cabrera eloquently explained this as "Trauma and pain afflict not only individuals. When they become widespread and ongoing, they affect entire communities and even the country as a whole. Multiply wounded societies run the risk of becoming societies with inter-generational traumas." In almost every story you will read of the layers and layers of wounds caused by emotional, physical and verbal violence.

I would like to emphasize that this group of ladies selected was not the difficult task in compiling this anthology. There are many like them with similar stories but it was the question of who we knew of that would most likely be bold enough to share their story knowing that they would have to return to the same household and/or community. Some speak of rape, some speak of verbal and physical abuse of their husbands/partners, some speak of poverty, alcoholic parents, the experience of their children on the drug 'tik' and the untimely death of their loved ones through the violence in Lavender Hill. Many of the stories have a combination of the above, yet the women move on and some struggle on.

As New World Foundation we are touched and blessed to have these women tell their stories to others and to begin a process of healing where dark secrets are not fostered and the shame can begin to fade. Following the printing of this book, the 16 women gathered in a private evening ceremony, with two friends or family each, sharing their stories with lots of lit candles, tears, good food and support. To the women who shared their stories: We honour and salute you and may this process be the start (as we have already witnessed) to your healing and your brighter future. To the reader, we believe that these stories will give you insight into a world other than your own, a place called Lavender Hill.

Kimindri Pillay
Coordinator Women Work & Mobilisation
New World Foundation



Bernie Peters (45 years)

“He hit me where nobody would see the marks”

I was 15 years old when I was raped. And then I was raped again when I was 24. I have a daughter as a result of that second rape. She is 21 now. I am grateful that when I look at her she never reminds me of the rape. She is my reflection.

I tried to commit suicide thrice. My first marriage was very abusive. I ended up in a psychiatric clinic. I empowered myself there. I realise now that I got re-married too soon after my first marriage. My second husband was a rape convict, I found out later. I never knew that when I met him. But when I found out, I just waited for a reason to leave him. When he threw a cup of coffee at me I left the house. He tried to murder me. He sexually abused my three-year old daughter. Nothing came out of that because they said there was no penetration. He suffered from schizophrenia, he has alcohol syndrome and suffers from epilepsy. All these things, I never knew when we got married. I first tried to help him but then I found out about his previous rapes and housebreaks.

I was single for three years after my second marriage. Then I met this guy. We lived together for five years. I was in my forties and he still wanted a baby. He begged and pleaded with me. So I said “okay” and I gave him a baby. Then he started to have an affair with a girl he worked with. Last year he left me. Apart from the child we have together, I’ve been raising his other daughter for four years now. She’s ten years old now. She wants to live with me. Her mother is on drugs and her father abuses alcohol. She calls me mommy. Even her mother asks her: “Why don’t you go live with your mommy?”.

“I always have a mask on my face”

I was born in Steenberg. I lived with my father and mother and nine siblings. I am the youngest child. I didn’t finish primary school. When I was in grade 7, I dropped out and I started working. I was naughty as a child. I was always fighting with my older brothers. At school I was bullied because I was smaller than the other children. One day the teacher locked me up in the cupboard.

I was naughty because I felt I didn’t belong in my family. I always got the left-over clothing that didn’t fit my older sisters anymore. My parents never told me they loved me. Today I understand why my father did all that, because he is like me. Today he is the best father I could ever have. But with my rapes my father is still in denial. He can’t believe such a thing happened to his child.

My father would normally come and pick me up at the station after I finished work. This time he didn’t come so my best friend’s brother in law picked me up. He was driving towards the beach and I asked him where we were going. He said he needed to pick someone up. Then he forced me to have sex with him. After he raped me he dropped me at the school behind my parent’s house. I was all dirty and bleeding. My father was already waiting with his belt and asked me why I was late. Before I could answer anything he started hitting me. Then I was put in a cold bath and I cried. I told nobody. I thought if I would tell my father he would beat me up again. So I told him there was a robbery at the train station and that people got stabbed and that was how the blood got on me. That has been my story for all these years. Until I got help.

The first time I told anybody about the rapes I was 27. On a Sunday I came walking home from church and a man who is sick in the head started insulting me when I passed his house. When I told my father how rude this person had been, he replied that I am always complaining about other people but what did I do myself? He started hitting me. So I snapped and I smashed his house up. Then they took me away, my brother and sister. My second youngest sister took me to her house and then she took me to see a doctor. He diagnosed me with chronic depression. I couldn't stop crying. He wanted me to talk but I said he wouldn't believe me. In the end, he got through and I told him about the rapes. Although my brother and sister know about the rapes now, I always have a mask on my face. Up till now, people won't know when something has happened to me.

"On my wedding night I was beaten up"

I got married when I was 29. We dated for 13 years. It was an abusive relationship. When I fell pregnant I knew it wasn't his child. Two months after I was raped they told me I was pregnant. They wanted to abort it but I said no, nobody interferes with God's work. When I was three months pregnant I told my then boyfriend off. He couldn't understand why. I didn't want my child to grow up in an abusive relationship. It was just my way of getting out. I was feeling guilty about the child not being his. We didn't see each other for three years. Then, when my daughter was four and a half years old we got back together and married. On my wedding night I was beaten up. I had to go sleep in the lounge on the floor. He always hit me where nobody would see the marks. I never told anybody, because I thought nobody would believe me. There was no week without a hiding. He was on drugs by that time. Then we moved out of my brother's house, they didn't want us to stay there anymore because of the drugs. At my parents' place, where we stayed for five months, he couldn't abuse me, because they would have heard it. Those five months were the happiest times in my marriage.

I stayed with him for six years. I was scared to leave him. He had an affair and I just accepted it. He was my world. What supported me was his father. A fly could not sit on my nose or he would throw a gasket. His father died in my arms. Three months after the funeral I left my husband. I left in secret. I put a lot of clothes in a bag and came home from work early. I told him I would go to my mother's and do the washing. Instead I went to court to file for a divorce. I knew I needed to be away the next Monday, when they would call him to sign the papers. I had an appointment to check into Kenilworth clinic on Monday. So I went to my mother on Saturday and started baking a cake. She asked me if I didn't want to do the washing. I said no, we could do it later. I just baked and baked and baked. We were supposed to sell the cakes at the market but I let all the cake fall out of my hands on purpose when we got there. I dropped it all on purpose. So we had to start baking again. I stayed with them on Sunday as well and baked again. My mother could sense something wasn't right. She was very supportive. I told my mother I was getting a divorce and that I was going to the clinic on Monday. She told me I had to tell my father. His reply was that my divorce was my business only. Once I had been admitted into the clinic, nobody could see me for three weeks. After that, I went to live with my parents. He got me on the road one day though, and tried to stab me but the police was too quick for him. I never laid charges against him.

"Your children will grow up believing that it's normal"

I did a women's empowerment course in the clinic. They showed a video about abuse and how your children will grow up believing that it's normal. A boy will grow up believing that it's normal to hit your wife and a girl will think it's normal to be beaten up. They also showed me around in the shelter for abused women.

My second husband also abused me mentally, emotionally and physically. But I learned my lesson and the first time he threw coffee at me I went to court. If only people would believe me that all of that

happened. I could sense that there was something not right with my baby who was only 3 years old at the time. I found scratch marks on her vagina. They didn't even take her to the district surgeon. They said maybe someone dried her harshly. But I know he sometimes used to hold her with her legs across his waist and rock her up and down. I asked him: "Excuse me! What are you doing?" I once saw he had an erection while doing that.

My second husband never knew I'm a rape victim. My first husband used to throw it in my face all the time so it became a secret again. I don't want to be pitied. My last ex-partner is a real role model. We were together for five years. His problem is that he is a party freak. Why did I fall in love with him? I was alone. But now we argue. We argue on the phone and on Mix-it. Sometimes he deletes me. The happiest period in my life was when he was in my life. I still love him so much. But he is younger than me. And he is a party freak. I am serious. I don't drink. I don't do drugs. His new buys him what I can't. She entertains him. It broke my heart when I saw her name in his phone as "future wife".

"That husband, he can fend for himself"

I know how to talk to the people. I did a course on community development. But I am a hard parent. Just like my father. I explain to my daughters that I don't hit because I want to but so that they'll be a lady. I will also reward them if they do good. It's a two-way story.

I am known as a person that can keep a secret. Confidentiality is my priority. I never had somebody to confide in. I can always sense another rape victim. I met this girl in the community and she is always so sour and grumpy. One day someone made a joke and she just snapped. I told her she can trust me and that she can talk to me if she wants to. She said I am not going to understand. I told her that she must remember the most important thing is to love oneself. "Do you know I am a rape survivor?", I asked her. She just smiled and gave me a hug. She still hasn't opened up to anyone. But she gives me a hug every time I see her.

I used to live for other people. I put my husband first, then my children and myself last. Now I come first. That husband, he can fend for himself. All women that have been abused always put themselves last. They hob when their husband snaps. Not because they fear but because they want to be good wives. I will never be like that again. I have half the money compared to when I lived with my ex-partner but I can do double the things I used to do. I no longer have to cater for his alcohol expenses and clothing. I take my daughters to McDonalds every month now. They still can't believe it.

I think many women who are raped stay silent because they fear being shunned by the community. Nowadays women go to the police but how many perpetrators get convicted? I feel the police are doing their work but the courts are not. The magistrates give perpetrators free bail. Who's to blame? It's the fat cats.

Due to poverty and unemployment men end up abusing drugs and get vulnerable. They might not always go out with the intention to rape someone, but when they rob you they might think: "Ag, I *mos somaar* have a *lekker* time with you". If people like me, survivors, would one day acknowledge our status and invite other women to come forward for help, we might break the silence.

Bernie Peters did not want to become a victim of poverty after she and her partner broke up. That's why she contacted the Village Care Centre. Since six months, she has a vegetable garden in the Village Care Centre. Part of the food she grows, she gets to use for herself and the kids. The rest of the food is being sold or given out in the community. The profits are used to buy new seeds.



Tiffany Joseph (21 years)

“I was seen as the only one that survived”

I grew up in Blodestreet. I was raised by my grandparents. I have two sisters, one is older and one is younger. The two of them have the same father. I have my own father. That always made me feel like I'm the black sheep in the family. My sisters have a Muslim father, they are much fairer than I am and I look much different to them.

My grandparents are very religious people. I see my grandmother as a mother figure and my grandfather like my father. It's not like something was lacking when I grew up, I still had that family structure, unlike many of the other kids in the community.

There were always cousins in the home; the house was always full of people. I was kind of shy and introverted, which is still the kind of personality that I have today. I was okay but I was not really *seen*. Not until I matriculated. I was just tagging along. Then I went to University. I was the first one of the family to go to University. Then my family became more aware of me and they started to treat me differently. I felt quite appreciated. A lot of them are victims of what is happening out here in the community of Lavender Hill. I was seen as the only one that survived. I feel like a survivor myself as well and a lot of my younger cousins see me as an example.

My grandparents were a big influence; they did not want me to be like everyone else, so they kept me isolated. They did not want me to fall pregnant at 15 years of age or drop out of school. Although I was living in Lavender Hill I did not have a clue about what was going on. I was only allowed to play in the garden, behind the fence and I went to a school outside of the community. I was not allowed to have any friends. I never rebelled against these rules. Up until today I am very respectful towards my grandparents and humble.

I only spend one year at university. I studied Film & Media. I sing; I'm a performer. Although I'm a shy person, when I'm on stage I'm a different person. But I wasn't really enjoying university. I struggled with that because I realised that is not what I want to do in life. I wanted to be famous and then I didn't want to be famous anymore. Our educational system is very weak and it didn't really prepare me for university, I was so overwhelmed. There were also other personal circumstances. I needed to work. And then after I worked I tried to get into University again, but my appeal was denied. So I came to volunteer at New World Foundation. I volunteered for the Aftercare programme for more than six months and I did different courses, like the life skills courses. Then Rapcan had a position open and I was recommended. That's how I ended up in my current job. My job is so interesting, yet very challenging, because my grandparents kept me in a bubble and isolated me from all that happens in Lavender Hill. My colleague introduced me to all these things that are happening in the community and he made me aware of the things that I was oblivious to.

“Abuse is the biggest problem”

In my job I am trying to change behaviour. I wish there was less abuse, less child abuse and more jobs for the people, more skills for them to access. Abuse is the biggest problem in the community. It's so big that people think it's normal. Parents don't know that you can also listen to a child instead of only shouting at them. When they become aware that it is not normal they start thinking differently. They will grow to understand that they do not deserve to live like this.

The most important moment in my life was when I was accepted at UCT. Nobody helped me, nobody even knew I went to write the assessment test. I got my own bursary. I did it all on my own. I was like over the moon when I heard they accepted me! I was sitting with the acceptance letters for three hours, just staring at them. I want to go back to university now. I'm twenty-one. I'm supposed to be learning as much as I can, being with students. I want to do a different subject now though; I want to become a teacher.

In a few weeks I am moving out of Lavender Hill. I'm aware of what is happening here but I don't want to be living in violence, there is a life outside of Lavender Hill. I don't want to be afraid every time I have to take a taxi home. My dream would be to live in the northern suburbs, like Stellenbosch or Paarl, where the air is fresh and silence is loud.

I got like lots of dreams! I would love to have a school where the system is much different to how it is now. I only want ten children in the class so that each child can have that attention it needs and all their individual needs can be met. I also want it to not be so rigid; it must have couches instead of chairs. The children must be able to sit under a tree if they want to.

“I can do so much more with my life”

My grandmother has been the biggest influence on my life. My grandmother is a strong woman because she as well has been through a lot. She is very spiritual and she has this child-like belief that whatever she says just happens. I get my strength from her. She gets a bit moody now that she's getting old and easily irritated. But I still love her.

My visit to Germany, last year, gave me a different perspective on life. Being in another country made me realise that I can do so much more with my life. It made me grow as a person. I am more conscious now of the many opportunities that exist out there, more conscious of where I could be.

As I am getting older, I am becoming my own person, depending on myself to influence myself by staying focused. I use myself as an example to show that no matter how you look, whether you live in Lavender Hill or Gugulethu, all you need is someone to have your best interest at heart and love and protect you at all times.

Tiffany Josephs works at RAPCAN (*Resources Aimed at the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect*).



Aysha Davids (47 years)

“It’s time for us to get into the driver’s seat”

I grew up by my grandmother. I was a few days old when my mother left me and when I first saw her again I was 18 years old. I am the eldest child and I don’t think she was prepared to have a baby at that time.

When I was dreaming as a young girl I would always think I would become a social worker. Which is what I am now. I am part of the ‘Women Hope for the Nation’ organisation. I mostly think why I became involved was my first marriage, which was very abusive. I always said that I would like to help women that went through an abusive relationship. We educate them and show them that there is help out there for them. We mainly work on domestic violence and child abuse cases.

You get so many women that are in abusive relationships and don’t want to take action. I think what really made me do this is because for so long we sat at the backside. It’s time for us women to get into the driver’s seat. Women have to educate themselves on how to go for the interdict. But if they are unemployed they worry about who is financially going to look after them and the children if they get divorced. That is their main concern. We can’t tell them to leave their husband; they have to take that step themselves.

“My child is your child”

Child abuse and domestic violence are really like a vicious cycle. When I speak to women and men, I always go back to their past, and I hear that their father abused their mother. It’s almost like it’s something right to them. It’s like a cycle that has to be broken. The men should also be educated and get it out of their mind that beating up the wife is the right thing to do.

Just recently we had three rape cases of children. They were 5, 7 and 11 years old. One of them was raped by her uncle and the other by her stepfather. (...) I wouldn’t say it’s getting worse though. I would say we are trying to get it under control. What we are learning in the community is that my child is your child. We have to look after each other. If anyone suspects something is wrong they should act on it immediately, whether it’s their own child or not.

I would say 70% of the families in the community are female-headed households. Even if there is a husband he is most of the times at home and the wife is working. I am proud of the way that some of the women we helped took a stand and got divorced. They now know that they are independent, they can look after themselves and run their houses. They were actually the head of the house all along. Even if the husband works, the children will still look for mommy to put the food on the table. What really makes us women proud is when our children are in school, when they don’t drop out. When we know that they will reach a goal in life. We know that what we didn’t have we can give it to our children.

In today’s world it’s easier to raise your daughters. A few years back you were proud to know that the son takes the problem out and the daughter takes it in. However, when this drug became available you had to be so aware of everything. The merchants tell the kids what to do. For our sons we have to be so

watchful, especially with the drugs being sold at school. My son from 23 was also on drugs. I dealt with him but in a very harsh way. I can tell you I punished him a lot. At that time he was 18 years old. I told him it's rather you going to come right or I'm putting you out of the house. I did not want him to influence my other children. It worked. I told him: "Remember when I put you, out nobody will take you in, you are unemployed. I don't think you will live under anybody else's roof like you live here". We also didn't allow him to play soccer on Saturday, which is what he loves doing. One of his friends that was on *tik* became very sick, that scared my son. He is now a role model for the kids though, teaching them to play soccer. That's what I always tell the youth: "Become your own role model". We don't have to bring in people here.

Abuse and drugs are big problems in our community and gangsterism is getting out of hand. That is actually very hectic for us. Children from nine years old are already on *tik*. Unemployment is also huge, but men should also learn to become self-sustainable. They are so quick to complain they haven't got work. I don't believe that you cannot even start with a vegetable project in your garden. Why don't they do that? I'm very against unemployment.

"We have to work 24/7"

We community developers have to work 24/7. That is very hectic. Yet I believe that there still is hope. I always say where there is life there is hope. But there are days you feel we should just withdraw and give up. But then, when you see the children at the end of the day, if you should also leave them, what is gonna become of them?

What changed is that people look after each other's children nowadays. Who is standing up it's mostly the women though. You strike a woman you strike a rock. They are braver than men. Even in the Neighbourhood Watch, the majority of volunteers are women. Especially when it comes to the children, they take a stand. The women will come in masses and we go and we sort it out. The gangsters are there, they are very evil in what they are doing, but they also have respect for women. They still have that respect. But when a man should go and confront them than it will get violent...

Aysha Davids founded and works for "Women Hope for the Nation", a community based organization that offers counseling in case of domestic violence and/or child abuse.



Sharon Dareis (53 years)

“It doesn't mean that they have to stay”

I was 15 years old when we had to move from District Six. My mother was the first hairdresser there. We were living in harmony. There were different cultures living next to one another but we had respect for one another. There was no fighting. We lived amongst these old-time gangsters but we had respect for them and they for us. We were never robbed; there was no shooting, no fighting. The next-door neighbour would watch over us. We had respect for older people. It's not like “your-child-is-my-child” anymore nowadays. When you go and complain to a neighbour about her child's behaviour she will rather verbally abuse you instead of calling the child in and having a chat with it.

When we came to Lavender Hill it was only my mom, my grandmother and my foster sister Cynthia. Since District Six my mother reared children and I assisted her. At age 14 I left school. When my grandmother became ill I had to assist my mother fostering children. When I got married I became a foster parent myself. I fostered four boys and a girl. The youngest one will be 26 in December. He is still staying with me, he is a slow learner, he's got alcohol syndrome. He's a ballroom dancer now. I've also got five sons of my own. I reared all eleven of them evenly. I reared them as brothers.

Even today I'm doing community work. But I'm not the person who wants her picture to be taken to appear in the newspaper. I keep a low profile. We are a group at my church; we are called “The New Generation”. What I want to show the youngsters is that they always have to care for the elderly. I tell them that although they were born in Lavender Hill it doesn't mean that they have to stay in this area, they can do better.

“A lot of women, they keep it quiet”

I married a guy whose got six children, five girls and one boy. His wife died. His eldest daughter decided I could never be her mom. Because I was not much older than her. She moved out and that is how she influenced the others. My husband's son, he sexually abused his daughter Marlene. She was staying with me and in the weekends she would go stay with her father in Athlone. One day, when his wife brought her back I noticed something. I said to the wife there is something wrong. The following week I didn't give the child. I told her I want to see my stepson. And then she came out with a whole thing. “Mom, if I open my mouth, there's gonna be problems”. But he came the next week. We went to church. When we came back we got into my room and I asked him what he'd done. Couldn't he find somebody else to have sex with instead of his daughter? I got her into the child protection unit, she was only four but she could explain the whole thing. Then he was locked up; he only got five years. It's so unbelievable; he went to different organisations just to get his daughter back. But he walked against the wall. I got a restraining order against him. His daughter still lives with me. She's almost sixteen now.

Why is this abuse so widespread? I would say some of them are just plain sick. The other thing is, a lot of women, they keep it quiet. And then at the end of the day you get children who are abusive, because when they go to the parents, they won't be listened to. I always say, if your child tells you something, take note. When this thing with Marlene happened I warned my sons and my husband. My husband when he used to work, we would kiss each other goodbye before he left. But he did not want to kiss

Marlene no more. It took us two years to overcome that.

Marlene's father, when he first came to live with me as a child, I told him, no, no, no. There are no gay children in my house. Then he became a man again. But he doesn't know, he hasn't got directions. Now he's married to a lady, she's sixty-odd and he's only thirty-nine. He's got no directions. He was first gay and then he became straight and then he became Muslim...

From pre-school on Marlene never failed, she's doing well. All my sons have matriculated. She will also get there. I'm giving them the education that I didn't have. She doesn't get a chance to play outside, because these young girls now, they become pregnant very quickly. I'm very possessive with her. When she gets home from school, she stays inside the house. The only chance to play outside is on a Sunday when we get back from church. From eleven till one in the afternoon she can play and meet friends. Then I call her in, she always gets her chores. This is me. I'm old-fashioned. I don't care.

"She would give me a hiding, thank God"

The saddest moment in my life was when my mom passed away, five years ago. She died in my arms. Because my father disappointed my mother she raised me single-handedly. When I did something wrong she would give me a hiding, thank God. That's why I'm still the old-fashioned way too. Under my roof you will do as I say. Under this justice system there is the child's right, but where is the parent's right? If they don't respect me I show them the door. Until the day they get married they do as I please. The teachers are under pressure; the parents are under pressure. It's out of proportion. The children are really rude. The old people will always say that when a child is young, when he starts talking you should bend that tree. Once the child has grown up you can't bend anything. Then that tree wants to bend you.

There is no discipline at home anymore; parents are losing it. In this community it's drugs, alcohol abuse, unemployment also. But it's what you do with that unemployment. You can sit at home all day doing nothing... But as I say if you stay in this area you don't have to stay you can do better. Look at my son. He's not standing on the corners. Why don't people do something with their life, don't just sit around and wait for handouts. That's not me, sorry! I've done a lot of things! I don't have a lot of money but I know at the end of the day I will get my blessings.

My neighbour has a problem with her daughters. They don't want to go to school; they drink. But it's useless speaking to her. She just laughs about it. One Saturday these two were so drunk, but their mother wasn't home, she went to a dance. I went in and asked them what they were doing with their young lives. They just laugh in your face. Then one day their mother didn't go to work, she was so depressed. I told her to go to the school instead of waiting for the educator to phone her. Even though you work, make time to go to school and find out your children attend school. But she just gets more crossed with me. She hasn't got that strong personality.

In our community I blame the parents. They have no control over the children; there are no morals, no values, no self-respect, no nothing. There is too little communication in the community. The respect is lost. Respect is the biggest lesson I learned in my life. My mother and grandmothers taught me that. I'm still bringing it out to my grandchildren and children. Respect goes a long way. But it starts in the house; you can't pick up respect on the streets. You know, I used to drink. I wasn't a rowdy person. But even though I had a few drinks not even a fly could sit on my nose. But a few years ago I stopped. There was respect for me back then but not as much as it is today.

Sharon Dareis is the founder of "New Generation", a group of people that teaches children to respect the elderly. They organise an event for 100 elderly people each Christmas and pay for the event out of their own pockets. Sharon has five children. In addition to that, she adopted and raised six foster children.



Naema Moses (43 years)

“Children believe this is how life should be”

I grew up in Bo-Kaap. I come from a very big family, we were nine children. I'm the third youngest. For me, it was nice to grow up in such a big family. But I always ask this question, how can one mother handle nine children? I always said to myself, I will never have a lot of children. But when I look back, that was the best time of my life. I had a brother that was very strict with us. He felt it was his job. He was like a bully. With us growing up, my eldest brothers they were all working and we went to school. We got things easier than them. They never had any schooling. It was fun. I remember the coons, my brothers all belonged to different groups, the one wanted to beat the other in the competition.

I have two daughters; one is twenty-three and the other seventeen. The one is doing well at school; she's a candidate for Varsity. My eldest daughter she's a funny character. While she was at high school she got pregnant. I was very disappointed, but well, that's life. She's got two children. She's unmarried, but still with the same boyfriend. She's working. She borrows money but she never pays me back. Sometimes when I'm alone I'm actually laughing about it. Your children really know which buttons to pull.

I came to Lavender Hill nineteen years ago. For me, where I grew up there wasn't any violence. So when they were shooting in Lavender Hill, I was like, are we in a movie now? It was a huge change. But children adapt.

My ex-husband was on drugs, that was the reason why I left him, after three years of marriage. He was rude and verbally abusive. That is one rule that I made to myself, I will never allow my children to grow up in such an environment. When I went for an interdict against him, he came to my work twice or thrice, telling me I must go home with him. He used to stalk me at night when I walked from the station. My manager wanted to give me a lift but I told her I did not want to allow that, because it shows he's got power over me.

For me, I've overcome many trials. I've been to workshops to empower myself. Whenever a woman has problems with her husband they call me. I helped such a lot of women. The funniest part is, when women are in that situation, they phone the police and then they have to go to court and they withdraw the case. I ask myself, you've been through all that so why don't you both go for counseling? It's a thing that really is affecting our community. A lot of women have these abusive relationships for all these years and they are complaining but they don't do anything about it. I won't give people advice about what I think they should do. I'd rather give them options and tell them what is in place and they have to decide for themselves. Because when they make peace, when it's smooth sailing again, they will point fingers and say I'm the one who told them to do this or that. Domestic violence happens in all age groups. But in my perception, if you look at people in their fifties or sixties, they should be more relaxed. With the young people you can expect it because they use *tik* and drink together, so it's not surprising their relationship will be something like a roller coaster or fireworks.

“We as parents never talk to our children”

Firstly, I will tell you drugs and alcohol have a big influence on domestic violence. And secondly, children grow up seeing that, and believe this is how life should be. And thirdly, we as parents never talk to our children. Or, when they tell us something, about abuse for example, we don't believe them. Why don't the child want to tell his mother or father what is happening to him or her? Because there isn't trust or they are not comfortable with their parents. And we don't easily believe our children.

Many of the reasons that I am not in a relationship is because I saw these things happening. I do not want to be in a relationship because I have two daughters and anything can happen to them. I always tell my daughters they must tell me if something has happened to them, or write me a letter, if it's too hard to tell. Or they can tell my sister, if they feel more comfortable with that. That is also what I tell at the mosque, where I facilitate parenting skills trainings. But you see, what happened with the workshop, I had only four people coming in, because people don't want to come out of their houses. It's like people don't want to be educated. They prefer to stay ignorant.

You know what's happening, sometimes they can't express themselves well, or they feel stupid. Some of these children, they are so bright, but that shyness is keeping them away from everything they want. Or they think they are ugly. We can change that mindset, because everyone is beautiful. Our children should be happy. I think happiness is important. There must be love, they must be educated, they must have goals in life and achieve something. Nobody should be relying on handouts. My children, I want them to be the next female Donald Trump. I don't want them to be super rich, but be something.

My advice to the community is to treasure family values and treasure your children no matter what, because if you look back it's in no time that your children are big. If you look at the violence, life is so quick. Just treasure them and love them. And educate them. Don't take life for granted, treasure everything whether it's small, whatever it is, treasure it.

“Let us first get the house in order”

Once, an older person told me that when a child is born, you must cry. It took me a while to get that. I think because, ultimately, when your children grow up, you don't know what they are gonna become. That's why I want to ask them, the gangsters in this community, if they don't want to change.

Apart from domestic violence, the gang violence is a huge problem in the community. Some people want PAGAD (People Against Gangsterism and Drugs) to come in and solve the issue. You know why I don't want PAGAD to come in? I did previously march with them, but let us first get the house in order. The police have been trained for this, and it's their job. Otherwise, they are just earning a salary and not doing anything. The more police visibility there is, the more difficult it is for the gangsters to *smokkel* (smuggle). That is the only reason for them to sign a peace agreement, because they couldn't make business.

Some people in the community, they first act and then they ask questions. I feel we should first negotiate. It will take time, but gradually we will get somewhere. Maybe we should start knowing them, the gangsters, personally. Get to know who they are. Don't they want to change? I don't think we actually know them, we only hear about them. We don't know the person. I believe it starts with talking, you never know what the person might say.

Naema Moses does not have a paid job at the moment. From time to time, she looks after her grandchildren or people ask her to do favours. She also goes to elderly ladies, sometimes, to massage their feet or back. She's helping out at the mosque too, where she facilitates parenting workshops. She is attending a Muslim school at night.



Mary Bam (55 years)

“When I help someone, I forget about my own pain”

I was born in Constantia, at Governementseplaats. I was born very sick. I only weighed a kilo and two hundred and fifty grams and I had almost no heartbeat and pulse. My mommy used to say I'm a miracle child, because the doctors told her I wouldn't make it. They told her I've got one teaspoon full of strength and that is too little to be alive. But I stayed alive and I keep on fighting until this day. I'm a survivor.

Later on in my life, I once again nearly died. I lost a baby, my seventh child I lost. I lost too much blood myself as well and felt like a dead person. I was ice cold and I couldn't speak. The doctors turned my family away and told them I'm dead already. (*cries*) All the patients were very weak in that room; it was the intensive care unit. Then someone came into the room and discovered me there, it was my neighbor. I asked her for water and she gave me a cup of water. I prayed into the water to God that he turned water into wine and if he can't turn this water into blood because I have almost no blood left. And when I drank the water I felt my whole body warm up. That's why I can't stop doing something for the community. Because I promised it to God.

My parents moved to Hardevlei in Lavender Hill when I was still small. I was supposed to be in school but I dropped out. I started working as a housekeeper when I was eleven years old. At that time I also started helping out in the community. I've had many jobs. That's why I'm a Jack-of-All-trades. I can do catering; I sometimes sell doughnuts for a living. I make biscuits. Toffee apples, those I sell too. When I make money from it, I buy food for the sick. (*laughs*) I can't help it; I'm used to share. I always say we must work to survive. I ask the young gangster boys and girls if I can help them to make a living. I say we can buy fruits, make a stall and make a living. But they don't want to do that.

“I call my car Daisy”

I do this community work since I was 11 years old. I was so committed with the sick and abused people, because everybody abused me. I was abused since I was small. I call myself a counselor, I never had training for all this, because I do it, it's my passion. I do my job well, because everyone wants to come to me, I refer them to the New World Foundation, to psychologists, to the hospital. If I help somebody through counseling it helps me too, because I have a lot of hurt inside me. When I help someone, I forget about my own pain.

I have a car and that car is my ambulance. I take sick people to the hospital, I take children that don't want to go to school, and I talk to the principal and sort them out. Every December I take everybody to Gordon's Bay, and then we go lie on the beach, the sick people and the old people. I take all my medicines with me. We play games at the beach.

I call my car Daisy. Once I went to Elsie's River and a gangster stole my car. “That is my ambulance, that is my work”, I told the policemen. “Tomorrow you are gonna get your car”, they told me. “Yes, I believe so”, I told them. They found my car. I must come to Elsie's River police station. They want me to show the people who stole the car. Then I found out it was one of my patient's sons who stole it. The mother was abused by his dad. I did not want to open a case against him. I told him that if he wants to

be someone good he must work and help his mother make a living for his brothers and sisters. Some time after that his mother phoned me and told me he found work. I said: "Thank you Jesus".

My first job was at Mrs. Titus. My first wages was 50 cents. I ran home to my mommy and she send me to the shop. In those days we could buy a lot of things for 50 cents, like sugar and bread. I worked in a lot of places. Because if the boss or some of the staff abused me I left. I started working at 11 years old, as a housekeeper. The boss abused me. The Madam asked me why I'm crying. But I can't tell her that her husband abuses me. Maybe I was too friendly with all the people and they think naughty things of me. In a restaurant where I worked I was abused again. Every time I was abused I just changed jobs. One day I came from work and the bus was empty, the bus driver saw I was alone in the bus and I said I want to get off in Retreat station. He raped me and I cried; I was still young. I came back home and I tried to hide my feelings from my parents, because I understood I must work and help them put my brothers and sisters through school.

The reason I stopped going to school is because one day my sister cut all my hair off. I went to school with a scarf and when I did not want to take it off the teacher broke two of my fingers. I never told anyone about the broken fingers.

"I didn't know the rich man was the stingiest man"

I always forget about my birthday but people in the community and even the gangsters, they remember. One day this guy said: "Hey auntie I'm gonna sing for you". And that *dronkie* (drunkard) sang for me. And that made me feel so good, they bought me a cool drink, and that's enough for me. My children and my family say I'm mad, I share everything I got.

The people I used to take to church also once organized a birthday party for me in church. That is the first time I had a birthday like that and it made me feel so good. But then a gangster came into the church with his liver hanging out. Nobody wanted to help him - he came running straight to me. I pushed the liver inside of his body and took him to the hospital in Hannover Park. Everybody told me later that I was so great that night; I saved that man's life. If I go now into Manenburg and I'm hungry the gangsters buy me a pack of chips, anything they have to offer. One night my husband abused me and I ended up in hospital. That very same guy with the liver, he came to the hospital. I don't even know how he found out but he came to visit me and he said: "Sister I hope you are well because you are our community Ma".

Then I married this man, in 2002. He was young and sexy and all this. His wife died and he asked me to work for him as a housekeeper. Only in the weekends I went home. He asked me to work for him for five months. When my work was finished I told him I'm going home to my kids. He told me no, he likes me and he wants to marry me. I told him I don't like men; I come from an abusive marriage. But I also thought, if I got a rich man, I can supply all the sick and abused people. So I married him. But I didn't know the rich man was the stingiest man. I wanted to divorce my second husband the same week I married him. I even phoned to radio Tygerberg when they had an item on divorce, but they said I should have done it the next day after the marriage, then it would still have been possible. He was gone most of the time anyway. He just came in to make more babies. He always complained about my community work too. He said I'm jolling with the people. He once called my car a *hoerehuis op wiele* (whorehouse on wheels). These words made me so sad. But I said okay, the Lord will bless me again.

Then, one day, my husband put a sick man in my bed. I was helping a sick man and so my husband said we must sleep together, me and the sick man, because I'm jolling around. He himself went to sleep on the couch. He never told the people he put that man in my bed. I stayed up and I cried that whole night. That made me aggressive, I got panic attacks after that. I tried to commit suicide. But that sick men got up and took all the pills from me. He told my husband your wife wants to commit suicide. He

said "fock her". He's the preacher man! The sick man gave me some milk. I was so depressed, I got aggressive

Now I'm young, single and very free. The Lord helped me to raise my six children. Then one day, I phoned my mother and I said I want to talk to her. I showed her the book I wrote about my life and told her my hurts and my feelings, and why I was so aggressive afterwards. "Mary did you go through all this?", she asked me. "I didn't know you were such a strong person, you look so weak, but now I can see you are very strong", she told me.

"My house is a men-free zone"

When I told my mother and the doctors about the abuse I overcame all this. I'm Mary Bam, I don't give a damn, I don't like man. My house is a man-free zone. When I was young they just rape me and I don't think about abuse. I didn't know it's not right. Now my church and the community is the first priority. I am here to help people who was abused. I don't want them to go through the same. I'm a survivor but some people don't survive. I'm lucky to be alive, that's why I want to do this work.

One day when I was driving to church I saw this drunken woman lying on the street, she did not even have shoes on. I pick that lady up and I put her in the car, give her something to eat and put shoes on her. I ask her if she wants to go to church and she says yes. After church, she is sobered up. Then I discover that this dirty auntie got a talent and a half! She takes the guitar and she plays us a *nice* song. People got so jealous with that auntie. She gives me some fresh vegetables. I take it and bless someone else with it. Then I see that auntie's house was so dirty. I don't think about it, I clean the house and put some curtains up. I go to her and talk about the Bible. After that I go home. One day, one of the Philippi children tells me that auntie, she is in the hospital. I take all her children and put them in my car, all nine of them, and we drive to the Wynberg hospital. The visitor's hour was over but I said these children want to see their mother and sing a song. They went in and sang a song. Then I took them to my mother in Retreat, to have supper. Then I was stopped by the police because my car is overloaded. I said, I'm just doing this work without getting paid, I'm not getting paid like you, I'm just taking these children to the hospital. Then they tell me my license is due. I just laugh. One day I find out that one of these boys, her son, he was in court for rape. They get abusive because nobody is looking after them. *(cries)*

My dream is for people to speak up, I don't want them to keep their abuse quiet. I kept quiet for so long. In that time I could have helped so many people. Silence is not always golden, sometimes it is better to speak out. Everyone wants to come to me for family counseling now. My dream for myself is to have a nice *bussie* or a combi. To drive around in the area. I can't retire now, I'm still young. I'm still up and about. There's lots of people who need my advice. And also, I want to write a book about my life and sell the book. Maybe people can learn from my story and we can make money, to help more abused people.

Mary Bam is the founder of "Survivors", an organisation that offers trauma counseling services (drug abuse, child abuse, alcohol abuse, HIV/Aids, teenage pregnancy, etc). She is also active in the Neighbourhood Watch.



Norma Oliver (73 years)

“It was only the women in the trains”

It was 1976 when we were forced to move from District Six to Lavender Hill, I was in my forties. At that time, Lavender Hill was just two courts [block of flats]; there was nothing else, just empty fields. I had three boys at that time; my daughter had just got married. The boys were in their teens and we had to travel to Cape Town every day to go to school and back. Once, when we were traveling by train I lost one of the boys. It was so busy; the train was so full, that he got lost. I'm a person that knows what she wants. I only want the best for myself and for those around me. When I got married and started a family, everything was fine for five years. When we were removed from District Six we had to adjust and things didn't feel right anymore. My youngest child was nine at the time and I had to cope with the gangsters in the area with three teenage sons. Things were just standing still for me and my family. There was nothing wrong with us. But all of a sudden people were talking about Lavender Hill. They started calling it the Killing Fields. If you mentioned you came from Lavender Hill, it was like a weird name, there was a stigma.

After some time in Lavender Hill, the civic organisation started, people were coming together, having meetings. I wanted to see what was happening. I started going to the meetings and I got involved. That was also the time where my life started as a victim. After we moved to Lavender Hill, after some time, the men didn't go to work anymore. My husband also decided, one day, that he wasn't going to work anymore. He said there was no work. He was an artisan and when there was no work he did not want to do menial work instead. That was when I saw all the men hung out at street corners and the women went to work. It was only the women in the trains. I said to my husband: "Why don't you go to work?". I give his lunch and his money for transport to go to work. At the end of the week I asked what did you do? He didn't want to tell. Because they were also forming groups, the men themselves, I think it was gangsters. He stopped working and got himself involved in drugs. I was the breadwinner for twelve years. This caused a power imbalance. So he started abusing me. Yet I stayed in this relationship for thirty five years...

He was physically abusing me, but not so that anybody could see. And it was also mentally. If he wanted money I had to give it and when I didn't have there was confrontation. But never in front of the children. First it was the verbal abuse but when I started to speak out it was also physical. Then I would refuse to have sex with him and he would rape me.

“I think I am also a victim”

I always liked to have my daily newspaper. I like to be on top of things. That's how I found myself reading this weekend Argus. There were three stories in it about women that were abused. That's how I found out that it's not normal. I read the stories, I got the contact number and on Monday morning I went straight to NICRO. I said to them, I think I am also a victim. I was a wreck at the time and I felt like a zombie. I gave them my story. Then they advised me to come to the safe house. But I felt safe at home; I did not feel that I had to get out of the house. I thought to myself that's a lot of things to give up; it's almost my life I'm giving up. I did not want that.

Then my husband started to come to my work place and wanted to push me off the train, he also tried

to push me down the mountain when we went for a walk. But every time I was just one step ahead of what he wanted to do. He did throw boiling tea on me, once. I went to bed and I had all the blisters on me. The following night I was so sick, they had to rush me to the hospital. That was because of the burns. I was there for seven days. They wanted me to make a case against him, but I always thought I could handle it myself. The doctors said they fought for my life; there was all these needles and stuff in me. The nurses said that he came looking for me in the hospital to finish me off. Then one day they needed my bed for another patient and asked me if I had a safe place to go to. I said yes. Then, while they were trying to get me out by the backdoor my husband was at the front door, looking for me. I went to my auntie because she has a big dog. I had to make a decision to lose my family or to get on with my life. That is when I started fighting back. He wanted to eliminate me, I don't know why. Maybe because I'm a strong person. With coloured people, you must listen to the man, the women is nothing.

When I got better I left my auntie and went back home because my husband said he was going to keep the house if I wasn't coming back. Then I just subdued because I did not want all this fighting. Then, it was around that time, there was this ad in the Southern Mail for a training on how to start your own business. That is how I ended up at the New World Foundation and it has been the stepping-stone of my life. My whole life changed. I did other courses as well and learned more skills. Slowly my strength returned.

I started working at the factory from 13 years of age. When I stopped working I was about 42 years old. I stopped because, all of a sudden, the walls were coming down on me. I couldn't do it anymore. I stopped working at the factory when I came to assist these meetings in Lavender Hill, organized by the South African National Civic Organisation. They even made me Secretary of the Chair. That was about the same time that I came to the New World Foundation. It was difficult with my husband but I would just slip away.

My husband died fifteen years ago. I never divorced him. I just pacified him. I used to be a 24/7 girl here at New World Foundation. The course turned into something else, I never got out. First it was training, then we started a school of performing arts, and then we became 'Women in Action'... We even got involved with a new women's movement. It was helpful to occupy my mind and not to feel sorry for myself. I empowered other women by doing this thing for us in Lavender Hill. I learned so many skills at this three-month course at New World Foundation, like office administration, entrepreneurialism and computer skills. I still use it. I never started my own business though, because I'm so involved with the people. I want people who are destitute to grow.

“I had tools to use, that I learned in the domestic violence workshops”

Since 15 years I am now on my own and fighting for myself. First I had to overcome my fear. Then I got angry and my anger made me strong. I could do that because of the empowerment of my training and being involved in the community and having access to information. That kept me going. I didn't give in to my husband, I had tools to use that I learned in the domestic violence workshops. Say for instance, if he comes in now and he gets abusive. I would use to give back checks. But now I won't entertain what he's doing. At first he would say I am not allowed to go to the New World Foundation. He came in here one day, and he says he is hungry. I'm not allowed to leave the home, I must cook for him. So I quickly went into the kitchen of New World Foundation and I got everyone who knew about my situation into the kitchen and we organised him a meal. Then we took him to the social workers, they told him he must calm down. He was telling lies and I was just sitting quiet. I don't know what was going through his mind. Maybe he observed the environment. But something changed and then I was allowed to come to the New World Foundation every day. At that time the children had left the house, it was just the two of us. I was so afraid. I know what can happen even if other people are around. Killing was my main concern.

Then I find out he is sick, I never knew, because he was a very tidy person. But one afternoon I came from the New World Foundation and he was lying on the bed. I must go to the toilet, he says, and there I get the shock of my life. It was like all his guts were laying in the toilet. We rushed him to the hospital at False Bay. I told him, you know what, don't worry about me, don't worry about the children. But pray to God and ask him to relieve you from this pain and just open up. He said, when he comes home, the two of us will have a new life. But I knew the new life won't be with me, it will be with his Creator. The next morning they phoned me to tell me he passed away.

I never thought about divorce. I was always thinking, change will come. I'm so free now, and I'm glad to be alone. If I must think now of having another person that is going to make decisions for me... I never thought sixteen years would fly by so quickly.

Next year I want to open up my own organisation. We will work with youth and the performing arts. I am also concerned about ex-offenders, so we will be working with correctional services. We've got a school, this principal is so excited about what we are going to do! We wanted a venue, here I am talking with the principal. We were talking for two and a half hours and then he said the whole school is yours. I didn't ask for anything! I just knocked their boots off. But I don't want nothing for me, I want empowerment for the people. They feel used. I always say don't use the people, empower them. The mentality of the people has to change.

"Telling our stories gets us respect"

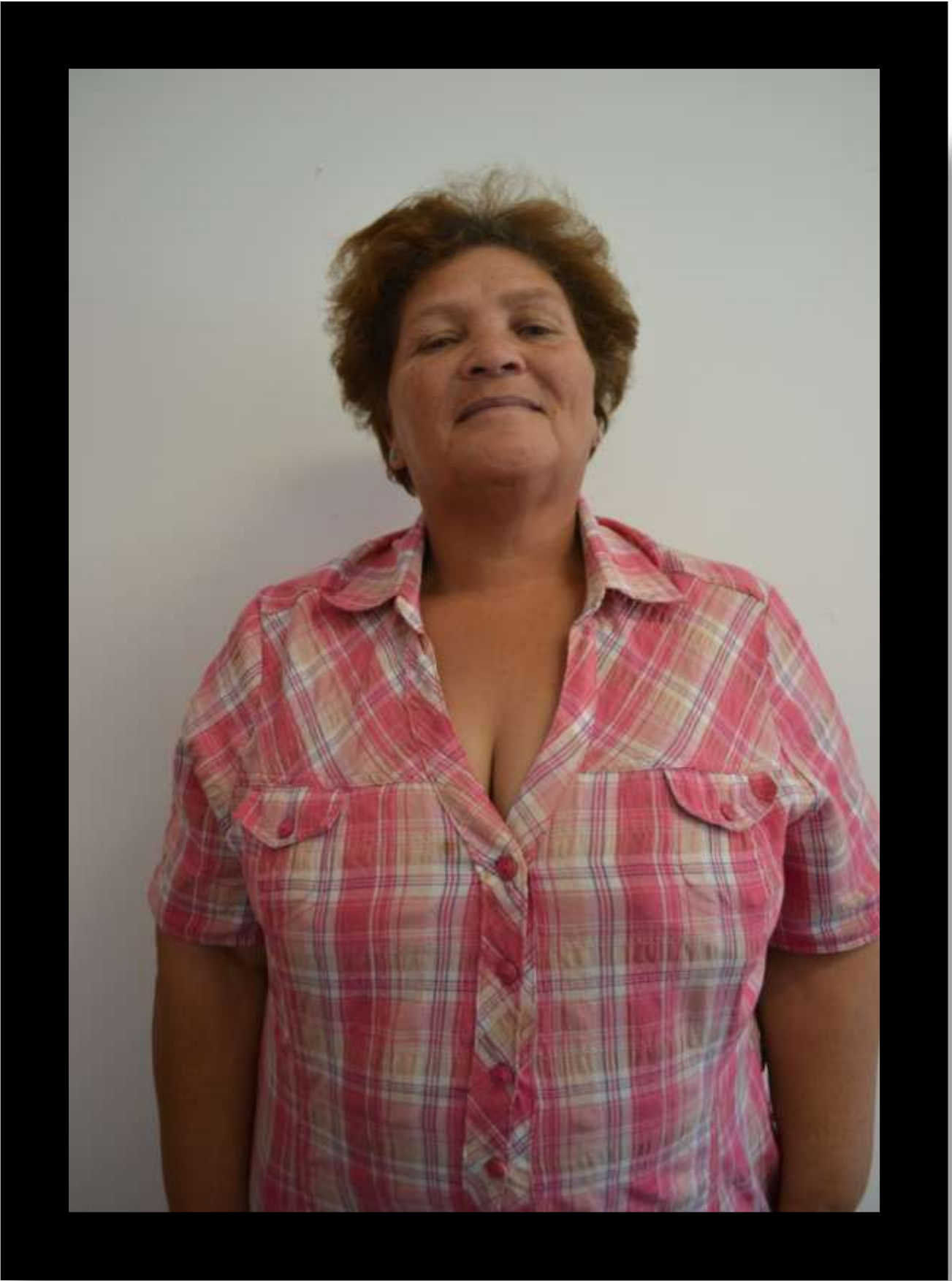
That is also why I am part of the Community Police Forum. I don't twist a thing; I just say it as it is. One day they said the police commander is pulling out his hair, he can't do anything about the notorious gangsters. Then I said, I feel the same like you. I also want to tear out my hair and break my clothes. But you know what, everybody whose doing this, it's one of their families, if it's not their mother it's their sister, and they know exactly. They know who it is who is in the gangs. Silence. Nobody said anything. One of these pastors came and said to me you don't mince words. I said I came here to clean the forum. I'm spitting it out, and if you don't want it you don't take it.

If you don't speak out you won't stand up. I have found a lot of power in telling my story. Telling our stories gets us respect as women. I feel strong now. I don't have anything but yet I have everything. People say to me I must write a book I say yes, I must write a book. My books name will be "Life can be beautiful".

If you are educated, you can help yourself. Education is the most important thing in anybody's life. It's not about learning the ABC, but about who you are. If I sit with people I can have a conversation, because I'm informed. If you are not informed, you can't perform. If you don't know anything, people will push you around, because you don't know your rights. If a gangster says to me "give this to me", I ask him "who are you?". And if he can't say why he is doing that to me he must just move on, because he has got no right to ask me.

If we don't give to this generation, what is going to happen to the youth of now? It used to be just a button or a dagga smoker. But the things they do now, look at the teenage pregnancy! Because of indoctrination colored people have a funny mindset. To get out of that, we need leadership. But it's very difficult to get good leaders. Once they think they are up there, they misrepresent. Most of the times, they want it all for themselves.

Norma Oliver attends the Community Police Forum meetings once a month, representing the Religious Leaders Forum (a platform of people from different religions working together for the benefit of Lavender Hill). Norma wants to open her own non-profit organisation, called MASAKHAN'I, which will run holiday programmes at primary schools in Lavender Hill. Her dream is to get her house in District Six back.



Veronica Wellene Ann Kroukamp (57 years)

“They shot him in front of his gate”

I grew up in three different areas. I was born in Peninsula Hospital Cape Town, but I grew up between my two grannies and my mother and father. During my first year my mother and father stayed by his parents, then they moved to my mother's parents. His parents stayed in Retreat and my mother's parents stayed in Grassy Park. From my third until my seventh we lived in Grassy Park. We lived on the premises of the Calvinist church where my father was a caretaker. My mother had her own business as a flower seller in Claremont.

From what I can remember, up till 7 years of age I had a wonderful childhood life. At the age of 7 my mother and father got separated. My father fell in love with another woman. My mother, at the night he left, she had three nervous breakdowns. She undressed and walked at the cemetery. Her youngest brother went to fetch her. For four months she couldn't think clearly, my grandmother took charge of me. My life completely changed.

I stayed with my mother until the age of sixteen. I had to be her mother. I had to care for her. At 13 years of age I left school and went to work for Muslim people to pay our rent and food. As we moved from my grannies house we went to stay at a farm in Ottery, on Kliproad. There we lived in a stable. When the farm had no more animals the farmer hired the stables out like houses. When we moved there my mother rented a big wagon where she put all our furniture and clothes on. We had beautiful furniture, but the people on that farm was very jealous of my mother, because they didn't know the class family we came off. I used to go to school in the morning and when I came back I saw they hit my mother and they took all her furniture. They overpowered her to sell it to them for nothing.

Another day, when my mother cooked food, the children of the farm came and threw my mother's food out and threw sand in the pots. My mother was a very pretty woman and very intelligent, but after the breakdowns she was not herself anymore. Until I turned 15 we stayed there. Then one morning she was feeling very well, she stood up and said she is going to sell flowers again. She went to a farm in Lotus River to pick some lilies and yellow and blue flowers. She brought it back and washed it off underneath the tap and then the landlord lady called six ladies to hit my mother for nothing. They undressed my mother and the one lady took a pole with a needle in and hit my mother on the head and she put the hosepipe and made my mother wet. And then another cousin of my mother that stayed on another part of the farm called the police. But when the police came, they did not take the ladies, they took my mother. The landlady made a charge against my mother and told a whole lot of lies. They took my mother to Grassy Park police station and she had to walk home from there. She did not have time to go and sell the flowers.

“He wanted to be the first one, for all the girls”

I experienced a lot of violence as a child. This guy who was the eldest at the farm, he hit us and also abused all the girls. That's when I was 13. He wanted to be the first one; he was like a father for all the girls. I wasn't happy with it but I didn't want to tell my mother because she wouldn't be able to do anything about it. I also smoked and experimented with dagga. If you don't do it you can't be friends

with them [the older kids] and they hit you all the time. I didn't do it all the time and I didn't make it a habit. But I smoked cigarettes every day. Then this guy formed a little gang and we as girls had to carry the knives. Then they go fight with the other gang and if we don't want to carry their stuff they hit us. Then I decided I'd rather work for my mother's people, so I was out of that farm. And that's how my life went.

When I was 16 my mother's brother died. He just came out of jail and then he fell off a ladder. After her brother died we spend some time with his wife. One Saturday night some of my friends asked me to go with them to a dance. I said yes, but then my mother wouldn't let me go. She had been drinking and said no. Then I tell lies and I said to her no we are not going to the dance; we are just going to the shop. Then we were just in the road. Then I heard her scream. The next minute I just heard a bump. But none of us saw a car, we didn't see anything, it was dark. We walked two after the other in pairs. I saw my mother just roll under the car's wheels. I ran and I saw my mother lying there and I cried. None of us expected that to happen. And then I immediately ran from there to my grandmother in Fifth Avenue. She shouted at me that I must run back to my mother. The ambulance was coming. I ran back. I saw them loading my mother in but they said I can't go with them because I'm too young. Then I went to stay with the neighbours. And the old lady, auntie Annie, she went with me the next morning to Victoria Hospital to see if my mother is still alive. She was unconscious. They treated her in the hospital, but she was paralyzed, she could only use her one arm.

My mother only lived for eight months after the accident. The only time that my mother and I were separated from each other was after the accident. I wasn't allowed to go and visit my mother at the hospital because I moved to my father. My grandmother believed in *sangoma* and said that my father did something to my mother, which was not true. I stayed by my father. Then one day I came back to see my mother, I was working with my father's sister at a bakery. There I bought two packets of biscuits, a can of guava juice and a big packet of peanuts and raisins. I bought the same for my sister and delivered it. I took my mother's packet to my grandmother. My grandfather still told me please don't go in by your grandmother, go straight into your mother's room. But I thought I must have that respect, I must first greet my grandmother. As she opened the door she asked me: "What are you doing here?". She gave me a smack. "You are the same as your father; your mother is now already cripple and you are not allowed to see her. Your father is sending you now with this stuff to kill your mother", she told me. I said no, as you can see it's still sealed, the products. But she put me right out by the door, my grandfather cried. If you put your feet here again I will have you locked up, she said. That was the last time that I was there. I was so heartbroken. I was crying for two weeks.

From there my life was never the same. I started to get very rebellious. Because of all what happened. That was a drunken driver. But even the police didn't want to take my statement. My mother's family had all written me off at that time. They did not want to know the truth, still up till today they are blaming me for my mother's death. One of her sisters would say that I would see how bad things would turn out for me and that I would not become anyone in life.

"He told me I must not look for him"

I married when I was 19. I got pregnant at 18. I loved him. Also, considering the circumstances of my life, I felt this is the only thing that is going to give me pleasure, to get a boyfriend and marry. The saddest part is that when I got pregnant, his parents said that it wasn't his child. Just a month before we were going to get married they said it wasn't his child. In hospital I had so much complications. His parents didn't allow him to marry me but he came to fetch me straight from the hospital when I gave birth. He was very brave to come there and stand by me.

My first five or six years of marriage was very good. My husband worked and he built us a house in Retreat. Then my husband became very abusive. He went to work one day and he told me that

morning – he was very furious – that he did not want me to go to church such a lot. The night before he had a fight with me and we separated that night. The next morning he told me he was going to leave me with the four children and I must not look for him. The Friday morning the hospital calls me; I must come and fetch him. A car knocked him over, he got a head injury. He was completely off, when I saw him I just laughed. They asked me why do I laugh. I said I laugh because he said I must not look for him, I must not look after him and look how he is looking now. After that, he was never the same. He wasn't committed to his job after the accident. So he got sacked. Then I had to go for counseling with my two children because he got aggressive and so the doctor explained me how my husband will be from now on, because of the accident. He will always see me as the enemy. For a few years it was like that but then they started giving him injections and tablets. Then my money problems stopped because we got a disability grand. We rise above our circumstances; we don't let ourselves go down.

“I don't feel that you must fight back”

It's like there has been violence during my whole life... My son, they shot him in front of his gate. A few months ago in March, he and his neighbour had differences and then their whole family attacked him and his wife and his mother in law. I said to him, they hurt you badly, but of my mind and heart I don't feel that you must fight back, you must rather lay a case against them. Then his neighbour, she keeps interfering with him. But I tell him to not fight with the people, because he's got a previous record, he's an ex-gangster. He was now ten years out of this gangsterism. For four years he was in with the Bostons, when the two brother leaders of the Bostons died he stopped and got married to his wife. He stayed with me for a year. None of the gangsters worried with him. But now recently the neighbours keep on. There were always people as witnesses to say that these people started first. The week before he was shot one of the neighbour's sisters had an argument with him again and she told him she will get someone to kill him.

The argument with my son was because he helped me with the soup kitchen. Whatever is left over from my soup kitchen I used to give it to him and he issues it out there, in his neighbourhood. Now this neighbour, whatever my son does, they want to do the same. He had a grocery shop, then they also do it. There was always that jealousy over him. He tried everything to keep his family happy. The community is still very said about what happened to him, most of them are lost without him, he was the only one who cared for them there at the back section of Village Heights. Their children are going to be hungry now. I'm now there with them, I opened a craft and prayer meeting at his house.

It was jealousy of the neighbours. It happens a lot in the community. What you do, the next person wants to do also and they will do anything to bring you down. They don't want you to get out of your position; they are always blocking you. But like my son he was a person that nobody can block him, it's like myself, we break through, we don't consider people's nasty things. For a few years now he build up a nice relationship with the community there at the back. They are very sorry and they feel lost, because their children's piece of bread was taken out of their moth.

I want to see the community grow and build their self-esteem up, because the people are unemployed and they believe they must just live with handouts. I show them how you can get out of that position, there is so many courses that they can take part of. What I give them is to make something with their hands and sell it and put bread on their table. I didn't go far in school but I went to adult education and I have a driving license, my Women Aglow certificate as a leader, I did English classes, cooking classes and home based care. I did a lot. I do not sit still.

Veronica Kroukamp and her friend Rose Sevil organize a soup kitchen and art & craft and prayer group meetings at Montague Village. Veronica also participates in the 'Women Aglow' women's support group. She is a nurse at night.

Anonymous (52 years)

“You have to concentrate on the perpetrator too”

I was born to a single parent. When my mother came home with me, my grandparents took care of me. I grew up in their home and under their supervision. My mother worked in Namibia. I never had any contact with my biological father. My grandparents took very good care of me and I had everything that I needed. But it was like there was always a void. I always wondered who my father was and why he wasn't part of my life. I used to think that I could be sitting next to him in the train or walk past him in the street and not even knowing that he is my father...

I went to primary school and then to Steenberg high school and then I got married to a taxi driver. Oh my God, that is where all the trouble started! I was twenty-one. But I had my first child when I turned seventeen, which was from the taxi driver also. The marriage was abusive. After twenty years I had to let go. I divorced my husband in 2002. Then I started going for counseling. That was also when I started going to the Community Police Forum meetings at the police station. They were looking for volunteers, to work at the police station. I did my training with NICRO here at New World Foundation. When I finished my training I started working at Steenberg police station, as a counselor. I mainly work on cases of domestic violence and abuse. But we receive any victim of crime at the Trauma Room. That was like my specialty. I think it was because I walked that road, I had that life, so I could sort of relate to what women were saying. I could relate to what clients were coming with and I had that intuition where I could assist and sort of walk the road with them. And maybe that is why I was doing the job so good. Eleven years later I am still there. The only thing that I am not happy with is that I don't get a salary for that.

After some time, I moved on and I forgave him for what happened, I think we became like friends. At the moment we stay next to each other on the same plot of land but in separate houses. He is remarried now. I went to a workshop one day and there was a lady that said to me the only way I am going to be able to heal is when I forgive this man. I thought I would never be able to do it. But one day he came to my house, he was so drunk and I said to him I forgive you and you must also forgive me for anything that I might have done wrong. And that is how it was.

“I see cases of abuse on a daily basis”

I see cases of abuse and domestic violence on a daily basis at the trauma center. I'm hoping one day it's gonna get better. As early as yesterday I saw a 15-year old girl who was raped by her stepfather. Yesterday she took an overdose of pills and she ate rattax at school. It's sad, very sad. Another case, that had an impact on me was a 13-year old girl that was a witness on the case of her father wanting to rape her friend. Just before that case went to court, I'm not sure if he raped this girl, but he slit his daughter's throat. I was at that scene, when I opened the blanket that she was in. After he killed her, he put her in a room, he locked the room and just left the house. But he got something like fifty years. It was in Retreat.

Yet another case was of a three-year old girl. The first time I saw this little girl was when the grandmother came in, complaining about physical abuse of the girl by the mother's boyfriend. But this

was such a vibrant little girl! We have a table with some things that children can play with, and I put her on the table and she was dancing. I asked her who beat her because she had blue marks. She gave us his name, the boyfriend's name. She was removed and placed with the grandmother. Then this case went to the children's court and the commissioner gives the girl back to the mother. Two months later, the boyfriend kills this child. The sad part of it, that same day the child's biological father was stabbed to death. As his body was getting out of the mortuary her body went in. That made me sick. I was angry. And I went to him when this guy was arrested, I went to his cell and asked him how do you sleep? He said he sleeps okay. One day it will get back at you, I told him. One day when the case went to the High Court the docket disappeared. So they released the guy. But I heard it is now found again. That is what I have to deal with.

You know what, most of the time, it is men on drugs that does that. I don't know. I can't explain what is happening in their mind. But most of the times, it's guys that is on drugs, and they don't, they've got that extra possessiveness over their daughter and that is what they do.

"Some of these men also come out of abused homes"

I'm still going on. Do I've got hope? I don't know. I just need people to become more vigilant of what is happening around here. People out there, they are not bad people, they just make bad choices, and that is the result of things like this happening. I don't know how we are gonna change the mindsets and educate them, but something needs to be done. Maybe with better resources, education, better housing and jobs. Better facilities for the mentally challenged people. With all of that, we will get somewhere. The government and the law should also be more strict with mothers who just abandon their children because of drugs. Because I feel I went through hell, but not one day did I turn to drugs, not one day did I turn to alcohol, so why should other people do that? Because my children was important to me, it was for my children.

I won't say it's mainly the men who are to blame for domestic violence. Some of these men also come out of abused homes. That is why it's important for children also to go to counseling. If that's the way you grew up, you think that is the way it should be.

What I have realized, is that we are all concentrating on the women and children. We are not dealing with the perpetrator. But I ask myself, if you don't work with the perpetrator, how are you gonna eliminate domestic violence? You have to concentrate on the perpetrator too, because he is also sitting with baggage. At the moment I'm just seeing victims, but I'm considering working with perpetrators. Like I say, there is hope for them as well, but somebody needs to work on it. They are also human.

I don't know where I get my strength but somebody up there is looking after me. I'm being blessed. Although I don't get paid, I just continue. I have a son that is married and stays with me, he gives me like a small amount. And I cope. What is so beautiful is when someone comes into your office and is so down, but by the time they leave they have a smile on their face. That is blessing me.



Anna Baron (45 years)

“They promise *takkies* and *Billabong* t-shirts”

I grew up in Ceres, a small village near Worcester. I was the only child. I grew up with my mother. I came to Cape Town in 1983. I was seventeen years old. I had a baby at that time, a son. He was twenty-four years old when he died. He committed suicide. He hung himself. It was too much for him. There was a time when he was on drugs and he had a girlfriend but she broke up with him. He was a very sensitive person. He was on Mandrax. I think he started when he was eighteen years old. In that time I started working in the community, helping children who were starting doing drugs, and now my own child fell victim to that. I couldn't understand because he grew up in a very spiritual house. He was happy in school. I think it was friends that influenced him.

My mother found him. He sent my mother to the shop and when she came back he was hanging there. I was at work at the time, they phoned me. It was a shock for me. But at that time I didn't realize it, because I had to arrange everything for the funeral. Six months later I realized what had happened. At that time I felt very depressed.

I did get support from the community. Especially New World Foundation was there for me. I did counseling and training. I started with a women's group. The life skills training really inspired me. It inspired me to start a women's group. We called ourselves “Women of Purpose”. We were doing workshops and different trainings and support groups. One of the ladies, she lost her son in the gang violence, so we had a bereavement support group. I coordinated that group for the organization “Women Circle”. I had a soup kitchen as well, at my home. We would do it for the children.

When I started the training at New World Foundation, I realized there is still light at the end of the tunnel, when you want to study. That really made an impact on me. I want to study community development. I learned that we women can reach a goal, that we can achieve something in life. That's why I'm still busy now with my matric. Three years ago I took a friend of mine to the University of the Western Cape. She's going to finish her nursing training. She's in her fourth year now. I like to empower women. I know there is hope. I want to study counseling too. That is really a need in our communities. There's a lot of mothers with their children on drugs. My dream is to uplift the community. I want to show people that we can rise above our circumstances. We can inspire our children.

I'm a survivor of cancer. Last year March I found out, when I was doing my computer course at New World Foundation. The doctors diagnosed me with breast cancer. It was hectic. But I stay positive. Breast cancer is not a death sentence. There is hope. Women are strong. After my operation, when they took my breast, I was thinking, now I'm gonna stop working in the community. But this is my passion, just to reach out to the people in our community.

“Three times they tried to kill him”

My son was a very positive person. His dream was to go study further. When I started with the community work, he told me that one day we are gonna open up a children's home. Every year I give the children out of my pocket, I give them a party, we have a jumping castle and they play. Before he

died, he had that dream of opening up a children's home.

It was mainly the drugs that affected him. The fact that he grew up without a father too. So he had low self-esteem. In our community, the gangsters, they call it tax. He worked in Cape Town in a hotel, but in our community the youngsters who do not work are very jealous. They taxed him, he must pay them. They take his clothes and his *takkies* (sneakers). They like the brand, the names. He said to me, there's no use to live anymore, because every time they hit me. Three times they tried to kill him.

I know who these gangsters were, because some of his friends they wanted to take revenge. But I said no, you are not gonna bring my son back by doing that. I forgave them. I made peace with it. I still show my love to them, some of them are also on drugs. God healed me from all that pain. There's times I miss him. My son always encouraged me to go on with the community work, to reach out for other people.

I knew it was gonna happen, I got dreams about his funeral. He also dreamt that he stood on his own grave. He warned us he was not going be with us at Christmas... It happened to him, I think there was nothing to prevent it. If he didn't commit suicide they would have killed him. I really don't understand this, but there is jealousy. If he got a job, he gave it his all. He liked to work. The other youngsters don't like to work. They called him names. His friends were also not working. He was different. Still, his friends are on drugs. Some say to me, there's no future for them. Some of them in their houses there's no food. They think to join a gang is the right thing because the gang leaders make a lot of promises to them. They promise *takkies* and Billabong t-shirts. They said they feel good with their gang friends doing drugs. Some of their mothers and fathers is on *tik*. Even some of the grannies is on drugs. It's very bad in our communities.

The gang violence and drugs are the biggest challenges in the community. But if we can reach out to the community we can make a difference. We need to tell the youth there is hope and there is a future for them.

Anna Baron works as a volunteer at the Village Care Centre where she is a HIV/Aids facilitator ("Storyteller") and a child care worker (after-care). The HIV/Aids facilitation consists of health talks, craft work and sowing workshops, accessible for both women and men.

Anonymous (41 years)

“I’m not that kind of person”

When I was six years old my mother and father broke up. My mother gave up the house and we, my mother and my sisters, we moved from here to there, living with other people. Eventually, my mother send us to her grandparents. I was at the age of ten then. From there, they put us in school. I went to high school as well. I only dropped out at grade 9. When we were moving around we didn’t go to school. I started at standard 2 when I was ten years old. That was like a big age, to be at standard 2. At the age of seventeen I left school. I failed at school and so my sister and I, we ran from home and hitchhiked to my grandfather’s nieces. We lived with them. We made friends there. I make friends easily with everybody. After some time we got a job at a flower place. We had a nice time. It was only casual work.

Eventually I moved to Paarl with a friend. I lived there with her aunt. We lived together there. That was when I split with my sister. That was still when I was seventeen. Then people came there and they said they are looking for someone who could work with them, to look after their child. That was in Cape Town. Then after some time, I left that job and went to stay with my sister in Manenberg. The next year she got me a job, at the supermarket in Elsies River. I worked there for a year. Then I ended up living with the people that I worked with. From there I ended up living in Retreat. That’s where I met my husband.

From last year I started doing things, like courses. Before that time, I had babies; I was actually a stay-at-home-mom, a home-executive as they say. I started a business course, then I did the parenting course, I did computer classes, life skills classes. The most important thing that happened in my life for me, it would be the job shadow that I did. That was important. It was intriguing for me as to say that I sat at home for most of my life. At the age of forty-one now, I did the job shadow. That was important for me. My husband is unemployed; I want him to get a steady job. That is why I am empowering myself now with these courses. Maybe one day I can be my own boss.

“I can’t have any friends”

In my life now, I am a pure person. I know I am for my husband and my children, I am only for them. But my husband is sometimes loving, sometimes he’s, how can I say, he’s very abusive. Like emotionally abusive over these years. He’s possessive, I can’t go anywhere. I can’t go to my mother’s house or to my sister’s house. I’m going to get emotional now... (*cries*) I can’t have any friends. If I go to the supermarket, I can’t walk in the street where my friend lives, I must walk all around it, to avoid coming to her house. I can’t be even your friend because your husband or your brother is now there. He’s accusing me of having affairs with just anyone. It started when my eldest son was born, that was nineteen years ago.

When I come home and I go to the bathroom, he says, where are you going now, are you going to rinse your vagina out because you had sex with another man? He’s saying words, how can I say these words... I talked about the abuse in one of the courses at New World Foundation. That was confidential; no one must talk about that. When I shared my story everyone was crying. I talked to

another old lady as well. If he must know about that, I don't know what will happen.

He's a good husband and father, but the abusiveness... I can't even stay at the gate or sit in the yard because I'm going to have a look at the nineteen year olds. I know I'm not that kind of person. I can't go to my sister's home because I would sleep with her son. My sister is married to a white man. I can't go there with Christmas, then he will say I like the white men's penis. It's hurting to hear these things. There is not a day that goes by without him doing this. He must just stop doing this and be loving. I don't go around with other men. I know myself, I don't do this stuff.

Today he is doing a casual job. He said I am making myself *lekker* pretty now to have sex at the New World Foundation. He says I won't mind taking three men at the same time. I would take one at the front, one at the back and suck another one's penis. He says I don't mind going for big penises because my vagina is so big as a coke can. I had enough of this kind of abuse. Enough is enough.

If I take him along to my mother or my sister it would be bad too. It would be worse. He would be stalking me. I can't even go to the toilet. He would say, I saw how that man eyed you. Why? It's my sister's friend. They only introduced them to us. What's wrong with you? Someone told me I must rather keep quiet when he says these things.

“I just want to be free”

One woman told me she had the same problem, eventually she left her husband. Another woman told me her mother went through that. Her father was saying these things to her mother and she thought he was saying the truth. At least I know my daughter knows these things my husband says about me are not true. She knows I'm not that kind of person. I don't know what they are going through, my children. I don't want my children to grow up without a father, like I did. Maybe they should talk to someone. Maybe she won't talk to me. She would always say daddy must come right, I don't know what's wrong with him. He's a sick man. She believes he makes this stuff in his mind and then he believes himself. I think he needs help. I told him he needs to see a psychiatrist. Then he says my vagina needs a psychiatrist. Or I must go tell that to my *naaiers* (abusive term for 'boyfriends').

My children, they also can't go anywhere. One of my sons, he loved the ballroom dancing and wanted to go to classes but my husband says that is for *moffies* (gays). And my baby, my five year old daughter, she loves dancing and modeling but I am not allowed to take her to the library, where they have courses. Children can't just go to school. They need to do things they love. We all have a talent. That's what I always say. But he says, why do you have to take the child somewhere, the children belong at home.

My weekend was fine. But how can I say it... I just want to be free.



Karen Doralingo (39 years)

“My husband gives me hope”

I grew up in Retreat. My mother moved with us to Lavender Hill when I was ten or twelve. We are five sisters. I was well behaved but naughty as a child, I liked to go places. I liked the outdoor life - discos and places like that. I dropped out in grade 10. I started working in Steenberg, in a factory. I liked to go to work, it was nice for me to go to work, because I know I would help with the income in the house, there was no father in the house.

I've got a good relationship with my mother. We are actually like sisters. We can talk about anything. I can say I have a happy marriage. But how can I say... Maybe it's because both of us is at home and there is no income. But we are fifteen years married now. Last year I did contract work for the counsel. I'm going to sign my new contract next month. I'm also working when there's elections. Whenever there's elections they appoint me as the deputy presiding officer.

I like to take on challenges, it doesn't matter what, I'm always available to take on that challenge. If I take something on I never leave it. The most challenging thing was when my husband asked me to marry him. As a young girl I never wanted to get married. But when he asked me, I thought, there is at least one man that wants me. I wasn't marriage material. I was a person that likes to do stuff, go out. My heart wasn't into men. My first child I got when I was twenty-seven. I was staying in Stellenbosh at the time. I came home to my mother for a weekend with two friends. He used to come in by my mother's but he didn't know me. Then he saw me and that's how it started. I'm very much in love with him.

“They put *tik* in their wine”

It affected me when my friend got raped. I was so shocked. She was gone for a day and then her mother went looking for her. When they brought her home she was in a car and we thought it was gangsters but actually it was the police. They told us what happened to her. She was abducted. She was twenty. It did affect her a great deal because she was so afraid to get out of the house and didn't want to talk after that. I had to get help for her. It traumatized her mother as well. It's not something that you expect will happen to you and your family. She went to a friend that day, together with another girl. They passed some gangsters that were sitting there, but they didn't know it was gangsters. These guys took them to a place there at the back of the area and drugged them. They put *tik* in their wine. The girl wanted to go to the toilet and they kept my friend in case she didn't get back. But she didn't get back. They took my friend to a bush and they raped her. The one guy left and she walked passed my house but she couldn't scream because he had a gun and told her he would kill her. He walked with her the whole night, they got on a train, she couldn't even ask the people in the train for help because she was so scared for her and these people's life. She said she wanted to go to the toilet when they were at Sea Point. There was a lady in the toilet, she told her what happened. That lady took her to a *bakkie* (four-wheel-drive) and asked to take her to Woodstock police station.

It affected me a great deal, because wherever help was needed I needed to be there, to relieve my friend's mother. I'm the only one that is taking them to go places and doing things for them. I had to go to Woodstock to take my friend for counseling. I had to leave my family behind to be with her.

She's got a boyfriend now. She had a boyfriend first but every time she comes to him she cries. He came to me and her mother and asked us what is going on with her, but we felt it was her responsibility to tell him. Eventually she talked to him, he's still by her and supports her. I think it's best for her to get a job. Since that time she was also on *tik*. She's finished now with it. I think she could have done something to prevent it, her mother told her so often she mustn't walk with that girl. I didn't even know she went for a walk and normally she doesn't go to that side of the field. It was just so sad that her friend didn't come and tell us when she escaped. They are still friends today...

The guy who raped her, he did get arrested. They finally arrested him; they actually were looking for him for a murder case. But some time ago the inspector came to our house and he said he's out on bail. Every time there's a knock on the door my friend thinks it's him and she locks herself in the toilet. She thinks he's coming after her. I don't understand how they can let him out on bail without him even appearing in court.

"I'm a women's group on my own"

I'm doing community work. There's a lot of people who come to me with problems. I take them for counseling. It's for eight or nine years that I'm doing that. Actually I'm a women's group on my own. I got a lot of stuff that I'm doing. I don't get paid for it, that's the saddest part of it. Everywhere I must go, I must lend or somebody must give some money. Every year I give a small party for some children but this year it's a bit difficult because there is no money from my side.

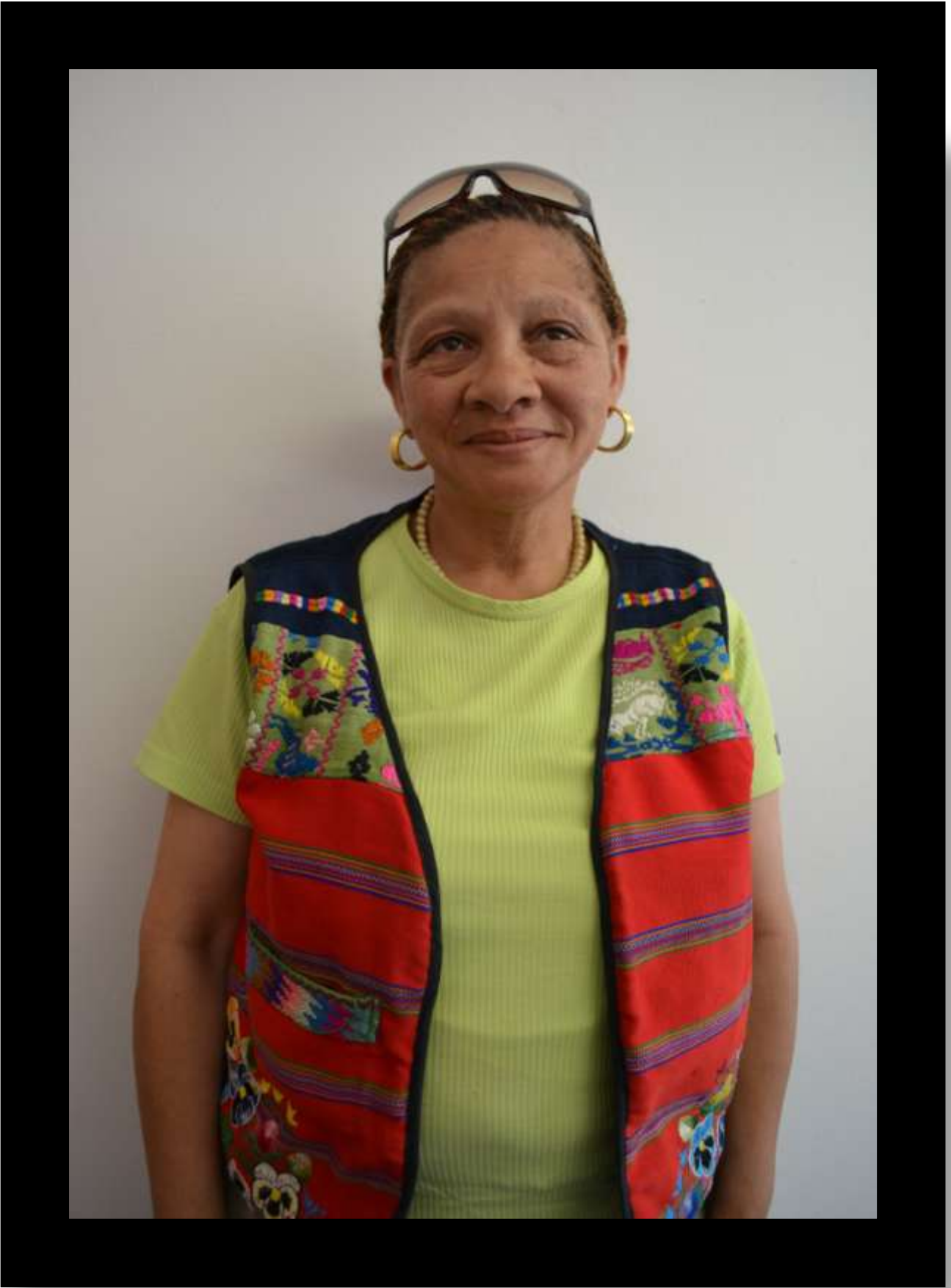
I like helping other people. It's very nice that the people in the community look up to me as a community worker. Actually I was just sitting at home one day, I used to live in the squatter camp and one lady came up to me and asked me why are you sitting like that you can start something. We started a women's group, but that didn't work out for them. Since then I'm doing it all on my own. Then I decided I wanted to do all the courses at New World Foundation. I want to open a crèche. I got my constitution and I registered for my crèche. Next year I want to open.

I never lose hope. My husband gives me hope. He's always supporting me in what I do although he knows I don't get a wage for it. He's a great inspiration for me. He lets me actually go on, when I feel so tired, the people that come to our door, he still says, no, come in, she's inside. Whenever I come home the place is clean. The only thing that he won't do is wash up. He irons his own clothes. He's doing his needlework. He sees to the children and makes sure that they eat. When I'm sick I've got no problem. That is actually the one thing that I like. This morning also, when I came home my place was clean so I just have to make the food. I do think some women are jealous. I can't lie about what my husband do or don't do so you can see some of them are jealous.

I do feel lonely with no colleagues, but actually I love working on my own. Sometimes people come to you and they trust you, that's why I like to be alone. It's mostly about the children that don't want to go to school and housing that they come to me. Then there's some people that come to me because of violence. The gang violence and house breaking is the biggest problem in the community. And drugs.

My point is don't let people get you down. If you have a goal in life, go for it. Don't let other people get you down and try to work as a community. Stay together, stick together. If we don't stand together there's not a positive future. I don't see a lot of people standing together. It's no use we go march together against gangsterism for example and after that we don't stand together.

Karen Doralingo is a community worker (voluntary). She's also involved in the Women's League of Cuba Heights and would like to be monitoring women's issues in parliament one day. Karen is planning to open up a crèche for community children in 2012.



Mavis Koopman (60 years)

“The words hurt the most”

I grew up in George. That life there was like life should be. But if you grow up you don't want to stay in one place. I wanted to travel and see the whole world, back then. I started working when I was sixteen. Looking after children was my first job. But I thought it was not for me. So I left the job and I started working at a factory. At that time it was like only whites get a good job. I was always like... I liked to learn. I was actually a cleaner but I would like to sit at the machine. I don't want to sit still. If I see you do this, I would also like to learn how to do that. By the end of the day I was the only one that could work that machine but they didn't want to pay me a machine worker's price – not even a learner machine worker's price. Then I left that job. I then was a cleaner at a clothing shop. There I also was like, saying to myself, no I can be a service lady. That was a good thing; I actually learned everything that I know today myself. There was no matric back at those days. It was just the good life. By that time they said, all right, we make you a sales lady. Because they saw many people come in just to see me, because I was a happy-go-lucky girl. I always tried to sell more. If they bought a skirt, I would say, what about that jersey? Don't you also want a dress? At the end of the day I must now be their sales lady. You must have compassion as a sales lady. You must always have a smile on your face. Don't just if they buy a cloth don't leave it at there; show them new stuff that just came in. I worked there for a long time.

Then one day, other people took over. So I worked for them for a while, also at their house. I cleaned the house, at the end of the day after work and I also sleep there. But no, they must pay me as a service lady and they don't have that money. So I was retrenched. Work was very scarce by that time. I decided I want to come up to Cape Town. So I started working in the factory again.

I met my husband here in Cape Town, in Maitland. I wasn't married for long but I've got four children. My baby son he is nineteen years old now. The abuse started in '91. This man, he told the court he is jealous. He would do anything that is dirty with a woman. My mother in law was a person that always kept the marriage together. She would always say we must stay together for the children. But one day I said, it's now about me. If I got blue eyes because of a smack I must leave the job and go to another job. I was so tired of that.

I met him in church. I was a woman that was always there for the church. That is where I met him. It's not that he was that bad, he was active in the youth group. It's only the devil that gets into the person sometimes. I wasn't so young when I met him. I was in my late twenties. We got married in George, in my church. In the beginning it was a really happy marriage. But the end was not so good. In '82 I got married. Then it was all nice, because the kids were coming. My eldest son is not this man's child. But the other three, two boys and a girl, they are his. He was very helpful with the children. That was very good times.

“Now he can enjoy life how he wants to”

When we moved into Seawinds the abuse started. That was in '89. Before that, we stayed at his parents. Now we were by ourselves and he can enjoy life how he wants to, with friends and whatever. He was always fighting and the drinking started. My father did never drink in front of the mother or the

children. And he has had good jobs you see. I thought, we can settle with this kind of money. But then the friends come and it's a drinking thing. And then he wants me to decorate the table with nice things for the friends and that was not my style. If I didn't want to do it I can have my smack and even the kids. I mean it's not about me but you must also be a role model for your children. It went on like that for more than a year. Sometimes I had to run away with the children at night to his sister, but then they would just send me back with my children at nighttime. He mostly hit me, but also my eldest son, because that wasn't his son. And he would swear. The swearing is so much to bear. The words hurt the most.

Then I meet these two ladies, Mrs. Samuels and Mrs. Fredericks. They tell me about a women's group at New World Foundation. Every second Saturday they would pick me up. I learned sometimes it's good when you talk out about your problems and don't keep it to yourself. That is when I started to see new life. That lady, Mrs. Fredericks, she was so straightforward. She would tell you everything that you needed to know although you don't want to know it. And the skills that they give you did help me a lot. I learned to deal with matters. If you're hurt don't keep it in, rather talk about it. You must always remember that you are very special in the eye of the Lord.

I got divorced after three years of marriage. That's eighteen years ago now. I think it was the alcohol that changed him. You see, the abuse was not the only thing. I also divorced him because he worked for a lot of money but we didn't see it. I am very happy with my life now. If I want to reach out to someone, I can. He always wanted me to stay inside. He even locked us up and then he would go away with the keys. I was actually like a prisoner in my own house.

"I can do now whatever I feel like doing"

I will always tell other women there is hope, although it looks like it's hopeless. I did go for counseling. It was a good thing that they sent me to a shelter with my children before the divorce. It was good because there were a lot of battered women. I thought I was worse off, but I saw some women there... It was about three months that we stayed there. I told them I don't want to stay at home, that man is coming for me every night. He even slept with a knife under the pillow. I couldn't sleep in that house. I have had a very good lawyer that let the counsel put my name under the house.

I work as a teacher at the aftercare now. Now I know how to handle kids. It started with the life skills, you learn from other people, and then you can see that child needs support, he needs love, because maybe at home he is not getting any. I like to play with children, that was my thing when I was young. If I came home they always ran to me and then I must catch them. I believe the Lord gave me this work because that's what I had in mind when I was a young woman. I say everyday you learn something new. I never knew I would one day be doing something like this.

As the days go on, you know, I think this is my happy years. I have had that bad times, but the Lord blessed me with four children and four grandchildren. I am pleased that I can see my grandchildren growing up. Part of the fun is I can play with them. If I would have been sitting in a situation with a man that is giving you this filthy life that you don't need I wouldn't have been where I am now. I don't know how some of the ladies keep going on with the same life while you can do something about it. I can do now whatever I feel like doing. If I feel like sleeping, I go sleep. If I want to laugh, I laugh. When I was in this abusive situation I had no friends, no nothing. I could not even say anything to the visitors in our house. He is the one that will do all the talking. He is the spokesperson. I believe there is a lot of other women that are hiding behind the man. In this place, in Lavender Hill, the ladies are working for their man. I don't see that. Not for me.

Mavis Koopman works as an aftercare teacher at Zerilda Park Primary School. She used to be part of the women's group at New World Foundation.

Anonymous (60 years)

“I always thought I’m a nothing”

Part of my childhood I spend with my grandmother because my mother was a domestic. When I was twelve my mother got a little place. At this stage I had younger brothers and sisters as well. My teenage years I don't remember. I only remember small bits and pieces. I can't even remember how I went through my high school years. I dropped out of standard seven. At some stage I went to work in a factory. I was very rebellious and moody also. When I went to this high school, it was at that stage that I met my boyfriend. I was getting pregnant, dropping out. I think I was nineteen.

The next stage is my married life. Before I was twenty-one I had my second child. Because I never knew who my right father was, I always thought I'm a nothing. I always felt like I had a double life, with one man in Cape Town pretending to be my father, and another guy who I once met, who told me he is my real father... When I married I felt like I finally was somebody. We were young. He wanted to go out. At a stage he was more outside than inside the house and I was sitting with little kids. I had all my kids but still I went back to the factory and brought my part. All my money went into his hands. I was never thinking you must have your own bank account. I was submissive. He was not abusive in a violent way, but verbally. And of course he also would have girlfriends. That just went on and on. But I would forgive him. At some stage I felt like I wanted to move out. He was making me feel like a liar and he was always right. Most women stay because you feel you are dependent on the man, on the money.

When I had my fourth child, I felt I wanted to move out. I went as far as Oudshoorn. When I finally found out who my father was I got connections there and I stayed there for three months. But my husband found out where I was and he came begging. At that stage the council wouldn't let a man stay in the house on his own, they wanted to throw him out. So I came back. At a certain stage we moved to a new area and things started to go smoothly. I think he felt he must make his family right, because I came back to him. But he was still the superior one. I must always be submissive. Then I started empowering myself. My daughter at one stage asked me how could I keep it out for so many years? I was always trying to keep the family together, because I didn't grow up in a family environment. I thought I was doing the right thing. And I did not believe divorce was the only option.

“Maybe the story must be told”

At the beginning of this year, I got ill. The doctor referred me to a specialist at the hospital. The doctor said to me, we must take blood. I went back in a week's time. When the results came, I couldn't talk about it, because it is too sensitive. He told me I've got a sexually transmitted disease. Do you want to know the name, he asked. I can't hardly say the name now. I was so devastated. It was syphilis. I said but I'm sixty years old. I've been with my husband for more than forty years. The doctor said I must come in because I need a ten-day treatment. I felt as if I could just run out and be somewhere on my own. Nobody at sixty years old will want something like that. The doctor said, if your husband gave it to you, he must also come. I got home and when my husband sees me, he could see I wasn't right. I couldn't talk. I wouldn't talk. I just said to myself, I'm going to tell my children what happened to me. So they know to be faithful to their spouses. Maybe the story must be told. It's a strong story and it can... where to next? That night I never slept. That was the thing on my mind. Where to next?

I asked the doctor, can this have happened to me eight years ago? He said it could even have happened thirty years ago. The germ might have been sitting in my system dormant, but now that I'm weak and down it attacked me. I spoke to my husband. He also couldn't believe it and denied it. He went for a test and it was negative. The doctor explained that if my husband took antibiotics through the year it could have gone away. But I knew he was in the primary stages because at certain stages he had to buy medicines and stuff. I thought, I forgave my husband eight years ago for that affair, what is the sense of disrupting our lives now? I don't know where to go, what to do. I decided I'm willing to go the next miles with him. I would want to be with my family. It was a sensitive time.

"I'm paying this price now"

It was a sad time, but it was also a time for me to say, is this what I really want? It made me feel that I know what I want. I can't stand rejection and I don't want to be on my own. That's why I don't know if I want the story published. How will the community relate to me? I really can't say. Because people has this stigma towards Aids. I was thinking, how will people judge me? I know there is other people who have the same, because at some stage in the hospital, someone said to me they get these kind of cases a lot. When I was in hospital you can imagine how humiliated I was. I was in this bed. Now the night staff gives over to the day staff. I was wondering what was going through their mind. Do they now think I'm a slut? Or that I had a rough life when I was young? I felt so humiliated the first two, three days. I just kept a straight face and did not burst out crying.

Why would I now want to disrupt a whole nation, I would almost want to say. The family relationship. Because I didn't grow up like that, I felt like I'm paying this price now for wanting a close family relationship. At this stage I'm content, but not with my health, because I must get back to the hospital for my health. I just want to be a normal sixty year old with ailments that a sixty year old sits with. Yet because of A, B and C, I've got these ailments...

I was lucky to have a very good friend. When I was having trouble with my husband she could console me, because her daughter was also going through something similar. That is what I like about women. We counsel and console and strengthen one another. We help one another through hardships.

I sometimes wonder how my life would have been if my real father would have accepted me. I now know that for my mother, she did what she thought was best for us. She felt rejected by him when he denied I was his daughter so she did not want him to be part of my life. I am so happy now when we have a birthday and the whole family gathers. That is the only thing that I want, to see my children happy. I never believed divorce was the only option. I did not want to be another statistic of divorce. I felt my children deserve to have a family. I stayed together for the sake of my children. And I did not want that cycle of disrupted families to go on. Now my husband is also old. I always tell him, when I pass away, these family gatherings must continue.

Because of a lot of hardships, I could work my way through dealing with a husband that I am dependent on. Because he knew the church people was also in favour of me going to Germany he didn't make a fuss. At some stage he couldn't handle it, he must have been thinking what is going to happen to this woman now? Because he thinks it's a women thing to do this and that. My children would wash up, he never would. But now we take turns, he irons his own pants. He didn't know how to relate with me when I became more assertive. In the past I had to ask if I could go for a weekend away. Now I just say the women's group is going on a weekend. I can twist him around my pink now. But he never wants to join me on a trip. Sometimes I find it annoying because I feel like a single person now. With a man being so verbally abusive, you, with your passive nature, you can make a partnership. Because there is a soft side in that person also, and over the years I could find out where that soft side is.



Katy Spendel (47 years)

“I question the Lord so many times”

I grew up in Parkwood. It was good. We were ten children, four sisters and six brothers. I went to school there. Later on we came to Lavender Hill. I was about thirteen years old. I left school in standard four. I worked in the factory. I enjoyed my work there. I didn't have experience in the work but most of the time the supervisor or the girls would assist me. I worked there for three and a half years. In that time I had my first child, I was about eighteen years old. It was from my boyfriend. Later on in life, he don't want me, my mother helped me to look after the child. It was sadness in my mind. Why he don't want me? I loved him but he wants somebody else. When I confronted him with the child he said it's not his child.

I leave that job and I get another job later on, I met another boyfriend and he married me. My mother talked to him; if he wants me he must accept the child. My daughter was about three years old then. He lived in Paarl. Later on I fell pregnant again and then we get married. The marriage was not good. The ten years of marriage was not good. He was a man that drinks so much. I would have stepped out three times for a divorce. But every time I changed my mind. I found out he was involved also with women. You hear what other people say but you don't listen. But you don't think it will happen to you again. Sometimes I confront my husband but he denied it. I asked the Lord to help me to catch him. It was here in Lavender Hill with that woman. I lived in Vrygrond at that time. I came to Lavender Hill at night so late. I always asked the Lord to protect me wherever I go because I want to see with my own eyes. I knocked on the door but he don't want to open the door. This girl knew me, we was also friends. They don't open up. I give the door so hard a kick and the door goes open. And there he was naked and she was naked and I just go home and cried my heart out. That was just before it happened, he was thirty-two and I was thirty-one years old. That was just before he died.

“Don't do that thing to her”

Me and him was together when this thing happened. It will hurt me all my life, until I die. But I want to tell it because the story might help somebody else. (*cries*) We was by our friends first, for their first Anniversary. We left there about a quarter to two, it was a Friday night. We were leaving Seawinds. When we walked up the streets, the streets where so quiet. We talk, he put his hands around me and he give me a kiss on my forehead. Suddenly we heard so many noises around us. I grabbed him so tight. I think it was horses, because of the sounds. Then it was five men. I grabbed him tight and I started to cry. They want to take me away from him. But I just hold my husband so tight. They got a gun with them. It was five men. Suddenly I was away from my husband because they grabbed me away. While we where walking the two of them have me this side while we walk and the other three have my husband. While the two was with me, they put their hands here by me. I see what they say to my husband, they say if he run away they will kill me. The whole time we are walking and they put their hands on my body. They play with my body and they put their hand under my clothes in my vagina. When we come to the field they put their hands so deep into my vagina. At that time I realize my three kids are alone and I beg them not to kill me. (*cries*) We go to the field I must take my clothes off. They hit my husband on that side. There they rape me, every one of them. They just do what they wanted to. All five of them. When one was on me the others they slapped my husband with the *pangas* (big knives) and I heard something crack.

There was one of them, when I begged him and I pleaded to him please don't kill me I got children, he said in my ear he didn't know these boys would do this and he said don't worry I won't let them kill you. When they were finished with me they left me there. I was also on my knees at one time and I must do that to all the penises, suck them. And both of them are at my back too, they did that to me too. There was one who said, no don't do that to her. Don't do that thing to her. And all that time I just begged. There was a time I ran away but they caught me again. My husband was already dead by then. When they were finished with me they leave me. They let me put on my long pants again and then they leave me. They said just wait here till they are gone. I ran and asked for help. The security said I must go to the houses and look for help. The police come and I must tell the story again and again.

"My story failed"

They find these five guys. A year later when they must come to court that was the most hard time ever for me, in that court. I didn't know how all five have their own lawyer. The way the lawyers asked me questions, it was as if they raped me again and again. They hurt me so much. I didn't go later to listen what they have said because my brother was with me and he took me every time to court and he didn't want me to go up and listen to their stories because they will all tell lies and it will hurt me again. They didn't go to prison, my brother told me. My story failed because I was just one and I had no witnesses. Every day my brother would go to court. He listened to their stories. Now how must I feel if I listen to them? They told the judge they were not there, they watched TV at home.

When I hear they don't go to prison, I feel like they can also take my life also. But I know just for my children I must be strong. My brother is a pastor. He came that time to me and I must tell him how I feel and we cry together. And he takes me places so that I can forget. But I will never forget, it will go on and on until I die. I want my children to have a good life. No matter what happens in life you must go on facing life and live happily.

I find God in my life. I thank God in my life. I have learned all the good things through stories in the Bible. That is what's helping me through in this life. I come to church and there I found the love and the strength and happiness. I sing in the choir. After my husband died God gave me another child, just to help me go on with life. I try to do good in life and tell the children who do the wrong things they must stop doing that. I give them the Bible. But sometimes the children don't want to listen and after that they get hurt. You know, that people, when they go home from something, they must also go in groups and take that person home and see that person is safe by the doorsteps. Or sleep over. Or take somebody home with a car. You don't know when somebody will come around. The streets are so silent.

"Sometimes I feel very lonely"

I'm every day alone in my house. I don't want to be in a crowd of people. I just go to my sister. Or my cousin. But I'm not going to other people's houses. I just want to be alone. When I go shopping and there's too many people I run away and go home. I don't like a lot of people because I'm scared they are going to ask me what happened. In this community, everybody knows it when something happens. Everybody knows I lost my husband. But I don't want to tell my story to other people. That's why I just want to be alone. Sometimes I feel very lonely. I had a boyfriend again. I've lived with him for four years and a half. He broke my heart. Oh God, I don't want to have a love in my life again. You want to have a friend next to you. He was now someone I can talk to when something happens. But he didn't love me too much to have me for him. And he takes the other woman now, last year, and he married the other woman. I can always talk to my brother about my life. It's all God's plan, that's what my brother says.

Sometimes I feel like I can't find happiness. My daughter says: "Mommy goes nowhere, you just stand by the window, you just read the Bible and pray". I say no, that is my life. I like my life how it is now. It's fine with me, here in the house where I am alone. I don't want them to worry about me.

After what happened I went to Observatory and there I get counseling to talk about what happened. I have told that lady the third time I came there I don't want to come again, I rather talk to my brother. Some days I just want to cry. Why did it had to happen to me Lord? Why me? I was a good woman, a good wife, why me? (*cries*) Sometimes I question the Lord so many times, but that was God's plan.

"I ask him to forgive them"

They all still live her around me, those guys. Some of the days I see them, but they don't know me. Maybe some of them know me but all of them go on with their life as if nothing had happened. Still they rob people, still they're breaking in. But the parents still covered up for the children doing all these wrong things in life.

I said to the Lord I forgive them, I ask Him to forgive them, but I will never come face to face and say I forgive them. I don't know how they can face life and still have a woman and make love and have children. And their stories still cover up a lie. Rather tell the truth and then you can be healed. If this case must come up again one day, I will say Lord forgive them and let them go free again. One day we will go stand in front of God.

Katy Spendel is a deacon at the United Reformed Church in Lavender Hill. She is a single mother and lives in a ground floor apartment in one of Lavender Hill's courts (block of flats). It's a dangerous place to live for a single mother with children. They frequently hear gunshots and her children already know they have to jump and lay flat on the floor when they hear these sounds.

Anonymous (49 years)

“Now I’m sleeping on the floor”

I grew up with my mother and my stepfather. We have four brothers and three sisters. I did play netball. The pole fell on my head when I was ten years old. I needed to go to the hospital. From that time, you know what happens? I have a problem with my head. They didn’t figure out what is actually happening. Now the doctor tells me the nerve at the back of my eyes, it’s damaged. I can only read big words.

As time goes on, I got married. We had a nice family together. But eleven years later, I went for the divorce. You know I had a good husband. He’s got his good points and his bad points. But something did go wrong there. He had somebody else. I did learn in life. Life wasn’t easy for me. At the age of fifteen I went to work because my brothers and sisters were very small. I did help my parents, even though he was my stepfather. Me and my husband, we went out for five years before we got married. He was a very wild person, he was a gangster. I did bring him down. I saved him a lot. He was like, nothing can tell him in life. I fell in love with him because sometimes we look at the person’s outside, but we never look at the person’s inside. His personality was very good and he got a good heart also for people. He liked to reach out to others.

We had a success marriage, he put me in a house, I can complain nothing about it. But I had a tough life. I did go through lots of things. He got lots of women. Every time I took him back. He abused me with his gun. He threatened me a lot. He had like how can I say... I can’t go out, I can’t go do what I want to do. Nobody knows what I’ve been through. I never tell anybody. We were like... nobody must know our things. I never give up. My mother used to tell me when you make a bed you sleep in the bed. For twelve years it was good times, bad times and sad times. I did eat tears for food and all that. That was part of my life, I just went through that. You know sometimes when God puts two people together, nobody can separate you.

“I just collapsed”

One day I went to court once and I said can’t you give him another chance in life? I told them I honour the court but me and my husband will sort it out. He never went to jail. How could I put somebody in jail? We did say for better or worse. I went through better and worse. But I was standing with him. Since that day I can’t take it anymore. My best friend was staying on my property with her husband and children and I never knew... She was my best friend. I knew about the other women, but her... One day I told my husband I’m going to buy some fruit, but I didn’t go to the shop I just went around the corner and then I saw him with her in one bed. I don’t know what happened after that. I just know I was out and I went into hospital but I never knew what happened around me, what went wrong. I just collapsed. Thank God he did take me through that. The Lord did take me out of the hospital. It was for me very hard. I still don’t want my family to get involved. I want to stand on my own two feet. One day, that was in 2006 I went for a divorce.

I never went for counseling, I never went for nothing. It was very hard for me. That is something that you can’t explain. You know that nobody will understand that you have a bond with one another. Nevertheless as time goes on we went for a divorce and he asked me can’t I cancel the thing? I said no

I'm too hurt inside, I can't do it. That was the hardest time in my life. My mother knew nothing. I don't want my family to get involved in things like that... I was a person, I didn't talk to nobody, I kept everything in. I always say you love all but you can trust no one.

"From everything, he must have the half"

I left the house because she, my friend, she don't want to leave the house. You can't fight with fire. I went to stay with my mother and my husband and friend stayed on with the house. I went to this lawyer, I went to that lawyer and everywhere the door was close. Then I got saved. I took a walk and this thing says in my mind, I just went straight to that church. When I came there that lady, she takes my hand and they let me sit there. I just spread my hands out and I said Lord I don't know what to say. And something said don't worry my child I am with you. I gave my heart to Jesus. After that I get a letter from a lawyer from the agency when you don't have money. After that I win the case. My husband got a private lawyer, he paid a lot of money, but nothing helped. My lawyer told me that lady must go out of the house; it's only between me and my husband. When the divorce was signed, my lawyer said, this is the end of the story. Are you going to give him half from everything? The choice is yours. I told her she must give me a week, two weeks, to think. Then she phoned me. Are you ready, she asked me. I said, yes I'm ready. I phoned lots of people, they must give me strength. I told her no matter what I did go through; from everything he must have the half. He did also work, I give him the half. We sold the house and I did get my half, he did get his half.

As I sometimes walk past the house that me and my husband lived in, I get sad. But I think sometimes you must go through a test. Through this, I did encourage a lot of women. Wherever I move I get people on the road and they are telling me their problems. I can tell them what happened to me and encourage them. I know what it is. You must go through a test to encourage other people. One day I was sitting in the bus to town and here came a lady from Claremont, she sits next to me. She gets a phone call and she says: *"I don't want you any more, please leave me, you hurt me a lot."* The tears came out of her eyes. And I just turned and hugged her and encouraged her. I told her I also went through this.

"Even the cups and the saucers, I gave them away"

After the divorce, I thought I was gonna buy me a small house. But most of my money I did take and I said Lord what do I do? I bought bread and I would go to the community people that haven't got children and I blessed them with the bread. I know there is a need in the community. And I did go with my furniture and I did bless people with my furniture. People that I saw, they sleep on the ground; they don't even have a carpet. I give them a mattress and a bed. All my furniture I did give away. Even the cups and the saucers I gave them away. I never said nothing, I just came into their house and saw: *"Oh, there's nothing in here"*. Then I put my furniture in there and said *"Okay, bye, thank you"*. I also gave my money away. I never even bothered to ask it back.

I am on the waiting list for a council house since '92. But every time they tell me stories. At the rent office, it goes like this: if you put something in my hand than I'm gonna see to you. The day you have money you have everything. But the day you have nothing... I sleep on the floor now. I haven't even got money to make a phone call.

New World Foundation

New World Foundation (NWF) was founded in 1980 on the Cape Flats township of Lavender Hill. Lavender Hill was established under the Group Areas Act (1950) of Apartheid. This act resulted in thousands of people being forcibly removed from their homes in District Six, Wynberg and Claremont to demarcated areas, known as “housing estates” in Cape Town. Lavender Hill's housing was constructed between 1972 and 1974.

At this time of hopelessness, injustice and war, NWF was established with the vision of “building a new world of hope, justice and peace”. The organisation was founded in affiliation with the United Reformed Church and it weathered the storms of intense political instability during the 1980's. NWF started with a crèche for 27 children in the Vrygrond informal settlement. During this time, it opposed apartheid and fought for the political and human rights of the people in Lavender Hill.

NWF now operates from its own community centre covering an area comprising Lavender Hill, St. Montague Village, Hillview, Seawinds, Vrygrond/Capricorn (formal settlements) and Cuba Heights, Military Heights, Village Heights and Overcome Heights (informal settlements). The political situation has changed dramatically in South Africa. However, after thirty years of existence, NWF is still fighting oppression. In Lavender Hill and the surrounding communities people's daily lives are affected by crime, substance abuse, unemployment, domestic violence, lack of infrastructure and gangsterism. Through mobilization, training, networking and cooperation with partner organisations and decision makers, New World Foundation works, in partnership with the community, to build a new world of hope, justice and peace.

How to get active

How to get help

Do you feel you are in a similar situation of abuse to that of the women in this book? Getting help or simply having someone that will listen to you is the first step in overcoming your situation. Please have a look at the next chapter 'useful contact numbers' and take action.

How to get involved

Do you live in Lavender Hill or one of the surrounding communities? Then please come join us in one of our programmes/activities. You'll meet other people that are concerned about the community and work together on addressing issues. We provide a space to talk, listen, share, act and celebrate.

New World Foundation (NWF) has two clear strategies that on a wide scale address gender issues and gender inequalities that persist in the communities we work with. These two strategies are *Women Work and Mobilization* and *Men Work and the Absent Male Role Model Work*.

Informal get-togethers

Come and join us during one of our **Tea & Talk sessions** which aims to organize more relaxed, innovative and informal ways to get organisations and individuals from Lavender Hill together to strengthen and build partnerships. The informal get-togethers operate as a discussion group where the women (and men) that participate are representatives from organisations, groups and individuals who are involved in doing something positive in the community. They express their challenges, successes, suggestions and support needed. Furthermore, a **Movie Day** is organised every month. Movies are screened on women and gender issues which are followed by a discussion.

For more information on dates, please contact:

Kim Pillay/Greg Philander
021 701 1150

Broad life education

New World Foundation facilitates broad life education and life skills programmes with a strong focus on self-development. Our approach makes a clear distinction between skills and knowledge transfer on the one hand and attitudinal formation work on the other hand. Attitude is the key software of the mind and the energy that determines what we do with the skills, knowledge and tools that we acquire. Come and join us in one of the following training programmes:

- Basic computer skills and life skills training
- Advanced computer skills and life skills training
- Computer training for community organisations and groups
- Home-based care training
- Positive parenting skills training
- Basic Adult Education training/literacy training programme

For more information on one of these training programmes, please contact:

Rukea Brenner
021 701 1150

Men Work and the Absent Male Role Model Work" Strategy

An important element of the *Men Work and the Absent Male Role Model Work* strategy was identified as "the diminishing importance of the male role model as a result of the 'absent male' in Lavender Hill and the surrounding communities". New World Foundation thus wants to start working more with men as well. We are currently busy researching and exploring the way forward. This is to be able to identify the kind of interventions and programmes that will address the absent-male challenge in our communities. The ultimate hope is that in time, this work will contribute in the healing of a very important part of the multiple-woundedness of our society and communities. A healing that will challenge men who 'lost the way' to 'stand up again' and to ensure that the younger generation of boys as they grow up will break down the pattern of fathers 'disappearing' from their communities and from the lives of their families.

For more information on future activities within the men work strategy, please contact:

Marius Bluemel
021 701 1150

How to contribute

You don't live in Lavender Hill or one of its surrounding communities, but you would like to contribute to our work? From time to time, we are looking for inspiring people that are willing to share their talents with us as a volunteer. Tell us what your skills are and we might be willing to establish a mutually beneficial relationship between you and our organisation! Another way of contributing to our work is to donate materials (computers, training materials, books, dvd's, etc.) or money.

For more information about volunteering or donations, please contact:

Vanessa Meyer
021 701 1150

Jan de Waal
021 788 4055

Useful contact numbers

Lifeline

Lifeline offers a 24-hour crisis telephone counselling service, 365 days of the year. Trained counsellors are available to talk to you and listen to you, no matter what you need to talk to us about. Confidentiality is the one of the cornerstones of our counselling process.

Office phone: (021) 461 1111

Helpline: 0800 05 55 55

Website: www.lifelinewc.org.za

Mosaic, Training, Service and Healing for Women

Mosaic is a non-profit organisation that enables abused youth and adults to heal and empower themselves in dealing with domestic violence and abuse. Mosaic delivers a range of prevention and support services.

66 Ottery Road

Wynberg

Phone: (021) 761 7585

Website: www.mosaic.org.za

NICRO Women's Support Centre (sexual and physical abuse health care organization)

Mitchell's Plain

Phone: 021 397 6060

New World Foundation - Advice Office

The New World Foundation's Advice Office is open to anyone from Lavender Hill, Vrygrond/Capricorn and the surrounding communities in need of legal advice on maintenance claims, civil matters, family law, labour law, social grants queries and all other family matters. Guidance, advice and sometimes counseling are offered. After an intake session, clients will be referred to the relevant institutions. Counselling by a professional psychologist is also an option for the more affected cases.

Phone: (+27) 021 788 4055

Fax: (+27) 021 701 9592

Email: nwfdev@mweb.org.za

Website: www.newworldfoundation.org.za

Visitors address:

Grindall Avenue

Lavender Hill

Cape Town

South Africa

Rape Crisis

The mission of Rape Crisis is to promote an end to violence against women, specifically rape, and to assist women to achieve their right to live free from violence. Rape Crisis Cape Town seeks to achieve its mission through counselling and training of women, thereby reducing the trauma experienced by rape survivors, and encouraging reporting of rape and the conviction of rapists.

Counselling lines:

Observatory 021 447 9762

Athlone 021 633 9229

Khayelitsha 021 361 9085

Website: www.rapecrisis.org.za

Survivors (trauma counseling services)

Survivors offers counseling services to anyone suffering from drug abuse, child abuse, alcohol abuse, HIV/Aids, TB, family violence, teenage pregnancy and/or peer pressure. All information spoken about in the counseling sessions is strictly confidential.

Contact person: Mary Bam

Cell phone: 084 236 9726

38 St. Thomas Street

Montague Village

Lavender Hill

Email: danielsangela36@yahoo.com

Steenberg police station

Cradock Road, of Concert Boulevard, Retreat

Phone: 021 702 9000

Website: www.saps.gov.za

Trauma Centre for Victims of Violence and Torture

126 Chapel Street

Woodstock

Phone: 021 4657373

Women Hope for the Nation

Community organization in Lavender Hill that offers counseling in case of domestic violence and child abuse.

Contact person: Aysha Davids

Cell phone: 073 8822 195

Office phone: 021 7012657

Email: womenhope4thenation@yahoo.com

New World Foundation

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