

Cheryl Zondi's Court Nightmare

Fight institutional sexism

Cheryl Zondi, from the age of 14 was sexually abused by Pastor Timothy Omotoso. She testified that more than two dozen other girls were kept in the pastor's house as his personal sex slaves. About thirty young girls who had been part of Omotoso's Jesus Dominion International Church were abused not only sexually but psychologically too.

Ndumiso Ncube
Tshwane WASP

After being taken to one of his private residences, the girls would be taught how to 'behave' and had to follow Omotoso's wishes. Threats were used to keep the girls from speaking out about their ordeals at the pastor's hands. The televangelist the girls had looked up to for spiritual enlightenment, turned out to be a vicious predator.

Cheryl chose to publicise her identity during her testimony in order to give other victims hope. However, her testimony showed why there is a great deal of fear among rape victims. Peter Daubermann, Timothy Omotoso's lawyer, forced Zondi to tell of her experiences with the pastor, demanding that she give up 'detail' than was completely unnecessary.

Given that she had already gone through such a traumatic experience, it



Cheryl Zondi in court.

cannot be fair that Zondi's dignity was not respected during her testimony. Although she was only 14 at the time, Daubermann's questioning implied that she chose to put herself in that position. Complaints came from the public as people turned to social media to voice their disbelief and disgust. This case mirrors many others in the country.

Between April 2017 and March 2018, about 130 sexual offences took place daily in South Africa. Those charged with the protection of citizens and administering justice often completely failed victims. Half of sexual offences reported were handled by low ranking officers. Numerous errors in the investigation procedures were recorded – ranging from poorly handled data from crime scenes, to the collection of witness statements.

Zondi's testimony above all else brings to attention the importance of eradicating gender inequality and combatting sexual violence. As a result of capitalist society being poorly planned, it is unable to look after those most vulnerable. The police are confronted with a large number of sexual offences, which they are not resourced to handle adequately. Furthermore, the ill treatment of victims by police and court officials themselves does not inspire confidence.

The Workers and Socialist party supports the victims of rape in their struggle for genuine justice. Institutionalised sexism and victim-blaming must be challenged.

The bureaucratic functioning of the courts must be reworked to protect victims. The police must be held accountable to the public to ensure that they protect all citizens, women and girls. The courage that Cheryl Zondi had, to look her abuser in the face during her testimony, is the same sort of courage needed to challenge the unequal hierarchies in South Africa.

Them...

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R200,000

Luxury apartment rent
R1,200
per month

Deputy-Ministers' salary
R165,000

Luxury apartment rent
R988
per month

Director-generals' salary
up to
R140,000
per month

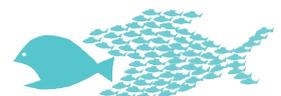
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