Good day,

I trust that this email finds you well.

I am a 45 year old male in Cape Town, South Africa. I am father to two beautiful daughters aged 14 and 5. The youngest one lives with my wife and I, while my eldest lives with her mother, my ex-wife. I have not seen my eldest daughter since December 2013.

Since the time my first marriage dissolved, I had become increasingly aware of the dynamics and changes in today's society, how people's mindsets, opinions and agendas have changed over the years. I am not someone who fights against change nor someone who thinks that my personal views are superior to others. I do have morals and opinions and beliefs and these are based on my faith as a Christian. Christianity teaches to be tolerant of others, to respect each person as God's creation and to love and support what is good and just.

In today's world there are things taking place that are nothing new, it's been happening since the dawn of time, as far as I can see it has become more pronounced and more frequent. Yet society has a knack to turn a blind eye to so many of these things and choose to focus on something else. So much attention is given to treat the symptom but the true cause of the illness gets shunned upon and ignored.

People nowadays are so focused on instant gratification, everything needs to be now, every whim and desire needs to be satisfied immediately no matter what the cost and no matter the impact it may have in the long run. Currently the "Woke" movements and ideals are on everyone's lips. There are so many different avenues or offshoots under that term, and it only shows how self-centered this day and age has become.

As I stated earlier, I am not against change nor do I try to judge people as a collective, I understand that every person has the right to their own lives and the choices that they make. Everyone should be respected the same way. What is good for one should be good for the other (within limits of course).

Regarding the gender based violence bill. I agree that there is a serious problem that needs to be addressed for the sake of every person's wellbeing. I am against violence as a whole, yet I do also understand the necessity for it under extreme circumstances but that is not the scope of my argument here today. No grown person should be guilty of abusing another human being, be it physical or emotional, direct or indirect, in any shape or form. No person deserves to fall victim to someone else.

Based upon countless articles and news reports and statistics, it has become evident that the main perpetrators in GBV are men, the victims being women, children, the elderly, the disabled and the like. While this may be true, I do not believe that the statistics paint an accurate nor complete picture. Does the statistic indicate anything that includes what transpired before, that caused the incident? I doubt that very much, and I am speaking from experience and being witness to many. Is there anything substantial that shows how the "victim" may have instigated or provoked the "abuser"? Does it show how the "victim" manipulated any said situation that pushed the "abuser" into a corner? I am not in any way trying to make light of a very serious situation here, but it's a vital piece of the puzzle that is so often and so conveniently overlooked. How much time has been spent to study this aspect?

I want to share two of my past experiences with you as an example to support what I am saying above.

1.

I was caught up in such a relationship once. I was constantly being targeted, belittled, insulted by a woman, because I did not meet her expectations at all times. At first she would verbally assault me, which would lead to a loud argument most times. It then progressed over time, got more frequent and intense, then she started showing violent tendencies - she'd throw stuff around the house and at me, causing lots of damage. Then she started hitting me with her flat hands and eventually fists and kicks. I defended myself by staying out of her way and covering my body but I did not retaliate physically. I would call her parents to come and intervene at times. I recall a few times when she physically attacked me while I was driving. She bit me and hit me through my face numerous times. I would only do what was necessary to avoid an accident, getting injured or worse. One evening it got so bad, she attacked me with a sword that I had hung up as an ornament against a wall. I did what I had to do to defend myself, to prevent her from causing bodily harm to me. This had become a serious life or death situation. I am not proud of what I had to do that evening, that one strike has been on my mind ever since, and I carry that around with me as a reminder to do whatever it takes to prevent it from ever happening again. She reported the incident to the police, and naturally I was seen as the bad guy. By no means am I trying to justify what I decided to do at that split second, if I did nothing I could have died at her hands that evening. She played the perfect role as victim, suffering at the hands of an abuser. Never did she admit or acknowledge how she had abused and attacked me, even the scars I had to show made no difference to anyone. I was fortunate that the charges did not stick but the magistrate made sure that I got the rebuke of a lifetime.

2.

My eldest daughter's mother has made my life after the divorce a living hell. When we met we were very young, early 20's and we enjoyed the nightlife and everything that came with it. We drank alcohol and used recreational drugs together for a long time. I had inherited a nice sum of money from my father when he passed away, so I had plenty to go around. We had a good time, went overseas, spent money on expensive stuff, whatever she wanted she got. I didn't care, because I thought she was happy and that's what I had wanted. Life was good, and we ended up getting married. I was happy, I had a beautiful wife, and a good job, I had little to complain about. But life took a turn for the worse and the money began to dry up. I realised that I needed to invest into our future so I put money away. When she couldn't get everything that she wanted as always, she started to turn on me. Our daughter was born, that changed me in so many ways, but the damage to our marriage was beyond repair, and one day after I endured more verbal abuse from her and her parents, I packed my stuff and I left. It was the single most painful experience I had ever felt. I knew that it would bring more troubles and heartaches in the future, but it was a better prospect than having to endure that emotional turmoil. I would probably end up doing something that I'd regret, that could make me end up in jail, or take my own life.

During the following months my life fell apart piece by piece. I got to a point where I just did not care about what happened to me. I continued working and earning a salary, and I supported my child financially as best I could. She was on my medical aid and I gave money for what she needed. Whenever I went to see my child, she was still very young then, I'd be on the receiving end of stuff said by my ex and her mother. I was constantly told what a horrible person I was, etc. I couldn't take my child to play outside without being watched, they did everything in their power to make the time as bad as possible. Every time I left, I'd sit on the sidewalk a way down, and just cry until I couldn't breathe any longer.

Eventually we got divorced, but without going into detail too much, my ex lied and manipulated the court system as best as she could - I have all the proof to support my statement. I had to pay almost half of my monthly salary towards maintenance that was completely over-exaggerated. I could not afford that amount, yet I tried to accommodate it as best possible. I never could give her the full amount in cash, but I made sure that her medical needs and other stuff was taken care of, and whatever shortfall there was, I gave her the money. The court order states that I can see my daughter every Sunday. When I did get to see my child, I was again under attack of some sort. It was made unbearable to say the least. But I kept quiet because I knew that anything I could say would be turned against me somehow.

One Sunday when I arrived for my visit, they confronted me and said to me that if I don't pay the full amount they will make sure that I will not see my daughter again. Even though I provided as per my means, and was not in arrears, they did not let me see my child that day. I went to the children's court the following morning, stated my case and was told to get a protection order against them. I was also provided with a warrant of arrest that in the event of being denied access three consecutive visits, it can be enforced by the police. The papers were served and promptly followed up by a scathing telephone call from my ex. I also informed the court of the financial situation and what I had put in place. This was noted and the magistrate told me that although it does not fully comply with the divorce order, it was sufficient because everything amounted to the same amount. I was told to have the court order amended officially with this. The following Sunday I went to the house, but I was told that they weren't there as they had gone out for the day. Telephone calls went unanswered and after a few hours waiting I left to go home. The following Sunday I went again, but nobody answered the door even though I could see and hear people inside. This went on for the next 3 weeks. After the 3rd or 4th Sunday I went directly to the police station with the warrant and protection order. But after trying to explain the situation over and over, I was turned away after being told that they cannot assist because it was a domestic issue and no harm was done to any persons.

I went back to the children's court the following morning. A summons to appear was issued to my ex for a later date. Unfortunately during that time I lost my job and my income ceased. I immediately communicated this to my ex, and offered something else in the interim. She did not accept this and blamed me for losing my job on purpose to spite her. I approached the children's court again with my current situation, and eventually had the maintenance amount lowered to an amount I could afford. My ex had no choice but to sign the document but she made it clear that she did not accept it and called me a bunch of horrible names in front of the clerk. After a few months my situation had not improved at all as I could not find employment. The money that I received from UIF ended as well which left me stranded. I had to sell what possessions I had left, and my car was repossessed with only three installments left to pay. I tried my best every week to see my child, but it became increasingly more difficult due to finances not being there. I would inform my ex that I was not able to make it. She would use this against me, stating that I don't care and don't love my child, etc. Some Sundays I would walk the 12.2 km from where I stayed to their house to see my child. Then I spent a few hours with my child, and walked back again.

The last time I saw my eldest daughter was December 2013. Just before Christmas, a friend drove me to the house so that I could give my daughter her Christmas gift. But they weren't home that Sunday. I left the gifts on the porch and left. None of my phone calls were answered nor did I receive any replies on the text messages I sent. For the last 9 or 10 years I have not been able to see or speak to my child. I tried calling but I was blocked or the phone would die when she heard my voice. I changed my cellphone number so often to try and contact her, but to no avail. Not a single one of my emails or messages on Facebook has ever been replied to. I have on my current phone an example of my attempts to contact them. At first the Whatsapp messages are read, but no replies. Then eventually the message would fail to go through,meaning that I had been blocked. I have been to the house but it looked to me that they don't live there any longer. I don't know where they stayed, I could only assume from the little I could find on Facebook. I eventually managed to get my ex's work address and contact number, but out of fear based on the past, I have not made contact. I went to the children's court at the end of 2022 to seek advice. I am not able to afford legal counsel at this time. I was referred to the Department of Social Services and I set up an appointment to see a social worker. I met with her and told her my story in its entirety. Due to the circumstances of the case, I have been subject to random house visits and background checks. I've had to submit my financial details for their report. No stone had been left unturned. But when I queried the report, I was told that it would be shared with my ex in due course. But when I asked for the report as well as her particulars, I was told it was private and I don't have the right to see it. It's been almost 6 months now, nothing has progressed.

These are but two examples of my experiences, but there are countless other men and women out there with the same or worse stories. I have been on the receiving end of different forms of abuse as you can see. A person can also argue the opposite, from my ex's point of view of how she's had to endure abuse from me. If another man of different temperament was in my shoes and I'm sure that there has been in the past, who is to say how that man (or woman) would react? People get pushed and pushed until they reach a breaking point. Some people commit acts of voilence, some commit murder, some suicide, some turn to alcohol and drugs, or worse. None of these on their own merit are justifiable in any way and I am not seeking to achieve that.

I am convinced that this bill with its current title, will not achieve the desired results. Unless the desired result is to create further division and damage to a certain group of people, mostly men. The way in which the bill is titled, shows that it is to protect women, children, disabled people, etc. against the acts of violence and abuse in all forms committed by men. I am further convinced that no matter how much it may be stated that it will in fact cover all victims of abuse including men that are abused by women, the reality is that it will only cater for women, children, disabled, etc. and that any man, whether guilty of abuse or completely innocent but manipulated by a woman, will endure further hardships.

While I do support the promotion of a safer society, it must equally represent every person that suffers at the hands of an abuser. There are other movements currently active all over the world that are promoting their unjust agendas, and when looked at collectively, it will become clear that it's being directed to a certain group of society, and that group is men. The role of a man is being made worthless slowly but surely. The role of a man as the head of a family, as the head of a household, is being attacked with the aim of reducing it to rubble. Our rights are being ignored, our values scoffed at, yet we have to be mindful of the rights of everyone else around us. The entire Woke agenda is designed to destroy the basic and just morals of society, to destroy the family unit, to weaken the populace and to take away any sense of self worth that people have.

This bill needs to be looked at again, to include every single person, no matter their race, sex, color, orientation, etc. If the intention is to purposefully exclude a certain group, then it is no different to the evils of the past, such as Apartheid, or the Genocide of the Jews, to name a few. If this bill is solely to promote the safekeeping of those that "suffered" it will only create more avenues for further bills that will only add on to the problems society faces today.

God does not sleep. People are rejecting God as a principle and rather accept their own self over that of everything else.

I thank you for taking the time to read my message.

Etienne Koedijk.