

# REDEEMING COMMUNITIES FROM GENDER BASED VIOLENCE

## *Orange the World: End violence against women now*

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**Y**ESTERDAY marked the end of 16 days of activism against Gender Based Violence (GBV) and these are annual campaigns that are observed from 25 November to 10 December. These campaigns date back to 1991 as an initiative by the Women's Global Leadership Institute. The leadership of this centre therefore, remains the co-ordinators of these campaigns each year. This year's theme is: 'Orange the World: End Violence Against Women Now.' This year's celebrations are special in the sense that they mark the 30th anniversary of the inauguration of the campaigns. Is GBV a societal concern in this post modern world? I have often heard such a question from people who think that GBV was an issue in uncivilized societies but now with civilized communities it is no longer an issue that deserves much attention. Such an assumption is far from the realities on the ground. GBV remains a major issue of concern even in this post modern world. The report to the General Synod of the Church of England by the Mission and Public Affairs Council acknowledged that, "GBV is one of the key issues facing all our global societies, including churches. It crosses boundaries of culture, faith, geography and wealth." This is a reality that justifies why GBV remains an issue that needs special attention and the global and local status testifies to this fact. For example, the following statistics testify to the severity of GBV in many communities; 1 to 3 women experienced physical or sexual violence, mostly by an intimate partner. The situation was even worsened by the Covid 19 pandemic. In 2020, over 243 million cases of GBV were reported globally. GBV has been regarded as a Shadow Pandemic by the United Nations. As the world is concentrating on fighting Covid 19, another Shadow pandemic in the form of GBV is gaining momentum. The Majorca Daily Bulletin on 15 June 2021 gave a positive report that GBV was on a decrease in the Balearics. The reported cases were 1147 which was a decrease of 15% when compared with the same period in the previous year. The same press



report of the second quarter of the year on 01 October 2021 dampened our spirits as GBV cases are again on the rise. What are the campaigns aiming at achieving?

1. Do not engage in abusive activities
2. Stop abuse
3. Challenge and denounce cultural and religious practices that perpetuate gender inequalities
4. Be sensitive and supportive to GBV victims.

We are celebrating the season of advent where we are preparing for the second coming of the messiah to liberate humanity. Repentance from sin is the pinnacle of our preparation and the repentance to be holistic should involve repenting from the sin of GBV. The Church of England takes the issues of GBV seriously as demonstrated by initiatives by the Anglican Consul-

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tative Council such as; Gender Based and Domestic Violence (ACC-15.07); The Trafficking of Human Persons (ACC-15.10); Violence and the Family (ACC-15.12), and lastly initiatives by the International Anglican Women's Network. (<https://iawn.anglicancommunion.org/resources/gender-based-violence.aspx>). These resources are a clear demonstration of the church's commitment to end GBV and other abuses. In the academic arena a lot of work and research has been done in the area of raising awareness against GBV. I would like to invite you to read some of the theological works that have shaped my theological reflections on gender issues. Below are a few reference materials for your reading that have inspired me:

1. Ezra Chitando: **Religious Ethics, HIV and AIDS and Masculinities in Southern Africa**
2. Church of Scotland: **Living a theology that counters violence against women**
3. Church of Scotland: **Gender Based Violence: An International Perspective**
4. Sidney K. Berman: **Of God's image, violence against women and feminist reflections**
5. Fundiswa Kobo and Reverend Leomile Mangoedi: **Gender Based Violence: a truth telling moment**
6. Mercy Amba Oduyoye: **Daughters of Anoma: African Women and Patriarchy**

May activism against GBV be our perennial identity and may we transcend above the prescribed annual 16 days. Be agents of the total elimination of GBV by 2030.