

<b>Friday 7<sup>th</sup> August 2015</b>		<b>SILENT PROTEST 2015</b>	
<b>Cathedral, Grahamstown</b>			
<b>5.30 p.m.</b>			
<b>SILENT PROTEST WELCOME</b>			

Welcome to the Cathedral, to this sacred space.

Welcome to all who have been part of the Silent Protest this year.

**Special welcome to**

Dr Lindsay Kelland and the team of organisers and leaders;  
 RU Vice-Chancellor, Dr Sizwe Mabizela, and those with you;  
 All Rhodes students and support staff.

**People and organisations from the wider Grahamstown community – local community partners:**

- FAMSA
- Child Welfare
- The Child Action Protection Forum
- The Raphael Centre
- St Mary’s Day Care Centre
- The Unemployed People’s Movement and affiliated Young Women’s Forum
- The Assumption Development Centre
- The Pan African Young Women’s Dialogue
- The College of the Transfiguration
- Grocotts Mail

**Schools who have participated:**

- Victoria Girls High School
- DSG
- St Andrew’s College
- Kingswood

All members of the Grahamstown community who have joined the Silent Protest and who are here this evening

We are in Women's Month; this coming Sunday is National Women's Day.

This is the 9<sup>th</sup> year of the Silent Protest. Most years the Breaking of the Silence has taken place here in the Cathedral. What does it mean to gather here?

This sacred space is a sanctuary, a place of prayer, worship; a place where we can be real with one another; a place where we face pain and betrayal and heartache; a place where all are welcome; a place for healing and hope, a place where we are enfolded and embraced by love and the strength of others. A place where we are surrounded by the reality of suffering but also the reality of hope and healing.

I acknowledge the mixed messages that the faith communities do at times give about sexual violence; the times when faith leaders seem to condone sexual violence, abuse, by telling women to keep silent, to remain submissive, to obey; the hierarchy, most usually the male hierarchy, of most of our faith traditions; the uncertain place and voice of women.

And the mixed messages, and role, of culture, for example the practice of ukuthwala.

We salute the strong voices, the strong women, of the various faith traditions – Mother Theresa of Calcutta; Malala Yousafzai (the Pakistani activist for female education and youngest-ever Nobel Prize Laurette); the strong women in our country, the march of August 9<sup>th</sup>, 1956; women leaders today; the voices and themes within our faith traditions and our cultures that do question and challenge and reshape.

The Silent Protest is a call and a challenge to our cultures, and our faith communities, to be protectors, to be liberators.

We break the silence, and we make this a sacred moment, a moment of liberation and courage and strength; also a moment (as Kim Barker reminded us this morning) of grief, and of lament.

Please know that you are very welcome here. This is your space. Use it. Claim it. Break the silence.

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