

## **Dissertation link: Evaluation of the CRC's Girl Child movement. # 38**

Advancing the girl child movement: a potential mechanism to curtail sexual gender-based violence against women in South Africa.

**Author:** Jessica Ashley Burn

**Supervisor:** Prof Hugh Corder

2019

LLM in Public Law – University of Cape Town

### **Abstract:**

Violence against women is not a social ill which has recently emerged, nor is it an unexplored topic in the realm of feminist academics, activists and lawyers. Yet despite streams of published articles unpacking the issue and numerous campaigns aimed at raising awareness about and combatting the prevalence of violence against women, it continues to be deeply entrenched in all factions of society. Furthermore, the idealistic society envisioned by the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996 has not translated into reality and the rights enshrined in the supreme law have not dissipated incidents of violence against women. With the aforesaid in mind, this paper intends to contribute to the array of solutions already developed, in order to assist in countering the most extreme manifestation of patriarchy, sexual gender-based violence against women.<sup>1</sup> As the time-honoured saying goes, 'prevention is better than cure' and in the same vein, a total reliance on the legislation and the legal processes in place to deal with the aftermath of rape, sexual assault and harassment, arguably have not and will not adequately address the root causes of these crimes. Hence, this paper contemplates a mechanism to strike at the core from which sexual gender-based violence stems, that core being the psychological entrenchment of male superiority and female inferiority - in other words, gender inequality. Overlooked prejudices against girls and women need to be brought into consciousness, to address them and break them down. If gender equality is sought, then we should be encouraging children to evaluate the status quo from a younger age and prioritise their role in re-imagining a society which values and promotes equality and dignity. Accordingly, it is submitted that a potential solution may lie in children's human rights education (HRE), specifically aimed at promoting gender equality and deconstructing patriarchal beliefs and ideas about masculinity. HRE is not a novel concept and is promoted in international treaties such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (Child Convention), and has, in fact, already been implemented in schools in South Africa in order for the post-apartheid generation of children to strive towards racial integration and societal transformation. Unfortunately, it appears that the goal of gender equality has fallen somewhat to the wayside in the formulation of these HRE programmes. It is submitted that the UDHR and the Child Convention read together with the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women and the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women, as well as the African (Banjul) Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights and the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa, support the advancement of gender equality through HRE programmes. In order to explore the possibility of developing HRE programmes in schools throughout South Africa with an underlying goal of advancing gender equality, empirical research was conducted in collaboration with the non-governmental organisation, Children's Resource Centre, based in Cape Town, which has developed a programme called the Girl Child Movement (GCM). The GCM aims to use the creative energies of girls to help build and sustain a qualitatively better world for girls and women. The goal of advancing the GCM is acutely targeted

towards preventing the pain, suffering, humiliation and dehumanisation of girls and women who are subjected to incidents of sexual gender-based violence, the war on female bodies.

**Reference:** Burn, J. 2019. Advancing the girl child movement: a potential mechanism to curtail sexual gender-based violence against women in South Africa. Faculty of Law, Department of Public Law, University of Cape Town.

**Full text:** ([thesis law 2019 burn jessica ashley.pdf](#))



UCT KNOWLEDGE CO-OP

The UCT Knowledge Co-op facilitated this collaborative project.

See <http://www.knowledgeco-op.uct.ac.za> or

Contact us at [know-op@uct.ac.za](mailto:know-op@uct.ac.za) / 021 – 650 4415