

#VictimNoLonger

By Lynette Oxley

Not being a victim is much more than blind good fortune or being able to defend yourself. It is a choice you make. It is a state of mind. Young girls and women in their twilight years need to make their safety a priority. “I am every woman” includes ladies that have been victims in the past and don’t intend to be victims in the future, as well as ladies that have never been victims and never want to become victims.

“I am every woman” is an initiative for ladies of all ages, backgrounds and from all walks of life who care about their safety and that of their families.

South Africa is one of the most crime-ridden and violent countries in the world that is not engaged in a declared war. As women, we are among the most vulnerable in this regard and we carry the added burden of being responsible for the security of our children.

The GOSA Girls On Fire “I am every Women” campaign aims to empower women emotionally, mentally, and even physically by showing them an alternative to victimhood and by providing them with the means to legally defend themselves, their children and their families against the crime threat that is a reality in South Africa.

A firearm coupled with the right mindset is the best way for a woman to protect herself effectively from someone bigger, stronger and meaner ... or from several such miscreants! The police are not there when these crimes are committed – they never can be. The criminal chooses the time and place of the attack, and they choose to attack when there is no obvious protection around.

As equal as people like to think the sexes are, biology defies political correctness. Properly handled, a firearm fundamentally evens the odd, and is a tool that can end a conflict before it erupts into violence. The mere presentation of a

firearm by someone under threat can redefine the circumstances and is often enough to nip an attack in the bud. Not looking like a victim is the first step to preventing you from becoming one.

And if an assailant nevertheless pushes on, and attacks, the right mindset and the tool to back it up means that you can to fight back!

Now let me talk about Victimology and the Law.

I have for decades been baffled as to why women have continually been cast into the role of helpless victims, bystanders to their own fate. We are constantly advised to not resist attack, to “give the criminals/robbers/rapists what they want”. This often means that we end up surrendering not just our belongings or our bodies, but often our lives too. Or even the lives of those under our care. Boadicea and Jean d’Arc must be weeping inconsolably in Valhalla. They were women, leaders brave and strong, who chose not to be cowed into victimhood.

It seems to me that victimhood is the new ‘thing’. Victimhood is the fashion statement of the 21st Century. We are taught that women have always been oppressed by ‘the patriarchy’, and victimhood is the cloak we can pull on to cover our shame. Now, if ‘the patriarchy’ were indeed solely responsible for the burdens we must bear then this would make a strange kind of sense. If our oppression were to be laid squarely at the feet of men at least there would be a perverted logic to it. But that is not the true story.

Unfortunately, not every woman cares about her fellow women and their safety (and I use the term “fellow women” here deliberately instead of the oh-so-popular “sisterhood” cop out) – the term itself is an admission of how debased we have become that the common language must be seen to be altered to suit our status as perpetual victims; in fact, often, other women lead the charge against us. Is this oppression by the matriarchy?

There are women who would limit us to playing the victim. There are women amongst us who care much more for the perpetrator than for those who suffer at their hands. Sometimes they are our worst enemies. On the International front we have Barbara Frey who has had huge influence on how nations deal with self-defence. And on the home front Adele Kirsten, from Gun Free South Africa, the

organisation that wants to disarm everyone – whilst she hypocritically shelters behind her armed response.

These women have (apparent) faith that the police and government will protect us from violence. In this sense, they are not anti-gun at all. They are big supporters of a state monopoly on violence. They seem unaware of the realities we have seen unfold in the history books whenever a state has been allowed to hold absolute power over their people. They are deaf to the lessons of Bergen-Belsen and Rwanda. They literally live in ‘La La Land’ a Utopia where life is ‘as it ought to be’, absolutely divorced from reality.

Furthermore, the criminal justice system in South Africa is not a deterrent against crimes committed. Less than 10% of violent crimes lead to conviction of any perpetrators at all. Violent criminals know that they will probably get away with whatever crime they commit – there is a smaller chance of getting caught and convicted than there is of finding a well-paying job.

Frey, in her report to the Human Rights Council in 2006, states that the police play a big role in the protection of the right to life, liberty and security of a person. The truth is that the police have no duty to protect any individual (the police in many countries, including South Africa, have made this point in court when they have been challenged), and most of the time when there is an attack the police are not present until long after the fact, and unfortunately in South Africa, our police services and the entire legal system is ill equipped to deal with criminals.

And in the real world, the police are usually not present when the violent attack takes place. Women face a heightened risk of violence when they are isolated – when alone with the perpetrator, or when socially isolated and where fellow citizens ignore violence that is taking place.

In all likelihood, in the overwhelming majority of instances when women get attacked, they will be alone with your attacker. It will be up to them – up to you – to protect themselves – to protect yourself and your family.

From CNN World December 18, 2018:

“The students had sued Broward County, the sheriff, the school superintendent and a school resource officer last summer in connection with the February shooting in Parkland, alleging they failed to protect them.

In a ruling last week, US District Judge Beth Bloom wrote that the school and sheriff's department had no duty under the 14th Amendment itself to protect students from Cruz, contrary to what the lawsuit contended.

The amendment says, in part, that the state cannot deprive any person of life, liberty or property without due process of law. Bloom, citing case law, wrote that the amendment generally protects people from actions by the state, rather than requiring the state protect them from third parties.”

But Frey goes on to say that there is no human right to self-defence – apparently natural law (to say nothing of common sense) means nothing to her. She believes it is the state that is responsible rather than individual civilians – this is a sure sign of the mentality much prevalent in society today. Bizarrely, she even states that there should be restrictions on the state to prevent the use of firearms to protect victims of rape and other violent attacks.

Adele Kirsten also at one stage wanted to take firearms away from our police force. These are women propagating disarmament of private people. Is there something perverse in these women making decisions for our well-being and our self-defence when the consequences are likely to be dire?

The attempt by both these ladies to deny people the right to self-defence has terrifying implications. If they are right, all the humanitarian founders of International Law were wrong – for, in fact, the entire body of International Law is based on natural law which proclaims the right to life and includes the right to defend that life. Frey, by saying self-defence is not a human right means that the principles of centuries of humanitarian International Law will collapse.

Both ladies also specifically attack private gun-ownership and believe humans have no rights other than the privileges which governments grant them.

Nulla poena sine lege

Our body of law revolves around the principle that anything which is not specifically disallowed, is allowed. In other words, if the written and established legislation fails to prohibit something – if it is not 'illegal' – then it is legal. This is the basic legal principle of most Liberal Democracies.

Positive law requires that everything allowed must be specified, and if it is not specified it is illegal. This position is also known as **Totalitarianism**. Well known proponents of this position are Joseph Stalin and Adolf Hitler.

Frey's position is based on an extremist version of 'positive law'. Positive law holds that humans have no privileges/rights other than that which governments grant them. Her denial of the human right to self-defence has far reaching implications that go beyond gun prohibition. Although her work targets gun-ownership, she directly defies and ignores history in terms of International Law. Positive laws are made by our so-called political superiors. They are rules made by an elevated 'class' and implemented to keep the 'people' in check. Natural Law, on which most International Law is based on, is moral and scientific law which is based on 'reason', one principle of which is the right to self-defence.

On a personal note, I decided a long time ago that I will do everything in my power not to be a victim. I simply refuse to be a victim. This is not a denial of unfortunate realities, but a starting point from which to set out to make this my reality. What steps can a woman – you, as a woman – take NOT to be a victim?

Firstly, acceptance. You must accept, that you are at risk of violence and violation. To stop this from happening, you need to be prepared to act decisively. Your attacker will choose the time and place to strike. You must be prepared for this.

Secondly, be situationally aware. Don't look like a victim. Be aware of your surroundings always, even when you are in a perceived 'safe' environment, such as

when you are home. If you don't look like a victim, the attacker may have second thoughts. Watch out for danger areas e.g. traffic lights, scan your surroundings and decide beforehand how you are going to deal with an attack. I get mad when I see ladies with expensive vehicles driving with their windows down. Other good advice is to know your environment and act if something is out of place. I currently have a Rottweiler pup, who is very much aware of what should or should not be in his environment. As soon as something changes, he is acutely aware of this and usually investigates and barks at it – be like my Rottweiler puppy.

Close your car windows. Be aware when you leave your home or come back in. Be aware in parking areas.

Thirdly, avoid potentially dangerous situations. This can be coming out of gym late into a deserted parking lot, going alone to a club at night, etc. When it feels wrong or scary, there is typically a reason for this.

Lastly, if you do need to defend yourself, be prepared to do so at any time and with everything in your power. My husband has the saying, **fight like the third monkey on the ramp to Noah's ark, and it is starting to rain.** Do something rather than nothing. I believe that if it comes to this stage, a firearm in the hands of somebody that knows how to handle it safely is the best defence against a larger, much stronger perpetrator.

But if you do decide to arm yourself:

- Make sure that you are competent with whatever firearm you choose.;
- Be comfortable in handling your weapon, know how to clear stoppages, know your practical ability and act accordingly;
- Think where you are going to carry the weapon. The best option is on your body in a holster somewhere;
- Practice, practice and practice – elite forces train until they can't make a mistake. If possible, join your local sport shooting club as this will help a great deal;
- When you are home, keep the weapon with you, even in the shower. This might sound paranoid, but I would rather be prepared than be surprised;

- Make the decision beforehand that you will be able to use your weapon if needed and work out scenarios in your head. If you get a bad feeling about something, trust yourself, act on it.

There is no place that is totally impenetrable by somebody who wants to attack you, so expect that. A lot of women say that they don't want to live like this. The choice is simple; are you willing to be a victim or not? It is a lifestyle choice, it is not an easy choice, but for me the only choice possible. My husband and I had a home invasion about 10 years ago. Cameras literally saved us from being surprised. We have high 2 metre perimeter walls, with an electric fence, beams in the yard, and yet the criminals still got in. My husband noticed them on the cameras, both armed, both wearing bulletproof vests, one very well trained. By being aware of our surrounding we were able to defend ourselves successfully. Also, do not trust other people with your security. You, and you alone, are ultimately responsible for your own security. Walled complexes, for example give you a false sense of security, you trust other people with your security, and you don't know who your neighbour is and to whom they give access to the complex. Look for the weak links in your security plan... you can be certain criminals are doing this also.

Why are women seen as good, potential victims? Why do we look more like prey than men do? We are usually smaller and weaker than our attackers and less aggressive and the possibility of a women putting up a good fight is usually limited. The criminal watches for any sign of weakness.

As with any predator in nature, a criminal selects prey on the basis of how easily that prey can be overwhelmed.

No criminal wants serious opposition because that would be dangerous.

Be dangerous!

In general, do not look like a easy prey, unaware of your surroundings. Make yourself less appealing as a target. Make yourself less appealing than another potential victim. Project confidence and awareness. Then make it hard work for them to attack you. Also remember criminals do not like to get hurt or killed. If

they can avoid this, they will. When push comes to shove, make sure that the criminal fears you.

Under which circumstances can you use lethal force.

There are basically three points to take into consideration. Firstly, the attack must be unlawful. The attack must be against a person and not property, and lastly the attack must be in progress or imminent. As a woman, in most cases if a man attacks you, he will have a physical advantage over you, so self-defence will mean any appropriate method to stop the attack. Play out scenarios in your head and think about what an appropriate defence will be in the case of rape which might end up in you being murdered. In this case lethal force can be used to defend yourself. You therefore need to take into consideration what the potential outcome of the attack will be. There is no way that when you are held at knifepoint or gunpoint or just threatened by a large perpetrator, that you would know what his ultimate intentions are. You need to act as if it will be the worst possible case scenario. Any confrontational crime can ultimately result in the victim's death – your death!

Defend yourself like that third monkey! Do not believe women like Barbara Frey and Adele Kirsten who say if you just give the criminal what he wants, he will just go away, this is not what happens in the real world. The media is full of stories of people murdered by their attackers after they had already given the attacker whatever it was that they demanded.

This brings us to the most effective way for you as a woman to defend yourself.

In general, we don't enjoy any advantages over younger, stronger, faster, more aggressive attackers... who have attacked us when they have decided we are most vulnerable and least able to summon support.

A firearm, and a well-trained lady on the trigger, is the most effective way for you to defend yourself against a larger, stronger and more aggressive perpetrator. The handgun has been described as the single largest civilising factor in human development. Prior to the development of handguns which could be easily carried and concealed by civilians, women (particularly) were extremely vulnerable on the

streets and alleys of all 'civilised' cities. With the advent of the 'pocket pistol' women could venture out alone, at their convenience, conduct commerce and engage in society as equals... for the first time in human evolution.

The gun IS civilisation!

Again, it worries me that other women are the foremost campaigners to take away firearms (and the most effective defence) from other woman. The right to defend oneself is one of our most fundamental rights. Personal self-defence is a well-established human right under International law. One of the fundamentals of the South Africa constitution is the right to life.

Among all the initial scholars in International law like Legnano, Grotius, Pufendorf, etc. there is a consistent theme that self-defence is an essential human right. No-one has ever seriously challenged this... until modern times. All these scholars feel that “self-defence” proceeds from “Natural law” and not from “Positive Law”, Civil or Canon.

Yet Frey believes that Self-Defence is no exception to the right of life, specifically that of the perpetrator attacking you. Self-Defence, according to her perverted logic, is no ground for derogating the rights of another (the perpetrator). She feels that if victims defend themselves, they would by implication be violating the rights of the attacker. She believes that lethal force can only be used to prevent a certain homicide. But how would you know that this is the attacker's intent – or, more to the point, what is NOT the attacker's intent? Unless you are gifted with the ability to see the future, and can know that you WILL survive, you are left to the mercies of your attacker and the vagaries of fate. And what about a perpetrator raping or assaulting you? Is this merely a violation of your body, or will it lead to murder? In any event, according to Frey, you would not be able to defend yourself without infringing on the perpetrator's right to life.

In my opinion it would be difficult to find any legal principle that is more universally understood and beyond debate than the right self-defence.

How would you as a victim know where the violence stops and what your attackers' intentions are. Is he going to stop at threatening you? Is he going to stop after hurting you? Is he going to stop after raping you – which in any case with the prevalence of HIV may very well be a death sentence? Is he going to cripple you? You, as the victim, cannot get into the criminal's mind and predict what his intentions are while defending yourself. You must defend yourself as if he wants to kill you.

To all the women out there – let's have a safe 2019!

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References (The following works were referenced and relied upon in the writing of this article):

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