

## Support women who speak out!

**We all know that rape is big problem in South Africa. Many things stop people from reporting rape. Students at UKZN are trying to change this.**

Thenjiwe Mswane grew up in Imbali. She remembers something that happened in her community when she was about ten years old. A man raped a six year old girl. Everybody knew about the rape. They knew who the rapist was. But nobody reported it to the police. Nothing was done to the man. Instead, people asked what the little girl did to make the man rape her: “What was she wearing? Why was she there? What did she do that attracted him?” People acted like it was the girl’s fault for being raped.



When Thenjiwe grew up, she met other girls who had been raped. She heard their stories, and learned more about how rape affects women. She remembered the rape of the little girl, and she knew that the community was wrong to blame the girl. The sad thing is that this story is not unusual. We all know stories like this, that happened to people we know!

Many rape victims never tell anyone. When children are raped, adults sometimes do nothing about it. This means many rape victims suffer in silence, without help or support. When rape is reported, some people are quick to blame the victim, not the rapist. Such people say many things, like the woman’s skirt was too short, and so she asked to be raped. Or that the woman should not have been in that place where the rapist found her. In this way, people make it much worse for rape victims. Thenjiwe asks, “How does a small child ask to be raped?” In the same way, we ask, “How does an old woman ask to be raped?” The truth is that nobody asks to be raped.

**Talking about rape is very difficult. Many people do not want to hear about it. It is time to change how we deal with this. Show support rape survivors! Get help from the right people.**



On April 19, students at UKZN in Pietermaritzburg joined the Silent Protest, to support rape victims who speak out. Rape survivors spoke to the crowd about what happened to them.

### We all need to understand:

- Nobody asks to be raped!
- Rape is always the fault of the rapist, and not the victim! It is not about what clothes a girl wears, or how someone looks.
- Rape is a crime which should be reported to the police. Rape should not be ‘solved’ by family or community members discussing it by themselves. It is illegal for girls’ families to take money for ‘damages’.
- By law, when a child is raped, an adult who knows about it MUST report it to the police. It is crime if you do not report the rape or abuse of a child.

## Where to get help:

Phone Lifeline/Rape Crisis  
033 - 394 4444 (all hours)

Thuthuzela Care Centre at Edendale Hospital  
7 a.m. to 6 p.m. Telephone 033 - 395 4325.

Childline Toll free crisis  
line: 0 800 055 555