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# Introduction

Within this article,[[1]](#footnote-1) we will focus on violence against women. This is not to ignore other forms of abuse but rather to offer a critical process we can apply to all forms of abuse. Too often, we rush to establish policies to prevent abuse, but many or even most of those polices are misguided or misapplied or, perhaps more often, are laid aside entirely when we are confronted with specific situations of abuse. Years ago, I, Ruth, was starting on a journey while my husband was away. He usually takes care of mapping our route, and it was not until I was already driving that I realized that I did not know how to get to my destination and had not ensured I had a map to guide me. Similarly, by rushing to prevention before identifying where the church is currently located in our responses to abuse, we do not arrive at the correct destination. Therefore, we must take the time to identify our starting point. That starting point is bias, an ubuntu with exceptions. While ubuntu recognizes that I am because we are, and sees the self in the other, bias says certain people are different and better or worse than others. A person who is biased against another, whether consciously or unconsciously, fails to see the self in that other.9 Thus the African Church must navigate toward an ubuntu without exceptions so that she may become an effective source of support for abused people and of accountability for abusive people.

**Part I**

Despite thirty years of focused attention from the UN and other organizations, violence against women remains a stark global reality. Abraham and Prabha note, “in this frightening scenario, the angst of the women who are victims of gender-based violence is a global concern.” The abuse of women is an urgent call for ubuntu, but we must lament that thirty years after ubuntu became a formative principle guiding the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) in South Africa, “one begins to question the whole philosophy of ubuntu, as it cannot be practiced by ignoring the sufferings of women.”10 How have three decades of global focus on the abuse of women and three decades of ubuntu’s application as a political principle failed so dramatically to decrease violence against women? How can we ensure our application of ubuntu over the next thirty years *does* significantly diminish violence against women?[[2]](#footnote-2)

**Part II**

Despite thirty years of focused attention from the UN and other organizations, violence against women remains a stark global reality. Abraham and Prabha note, “in this frightening scenario, the angst of the women who are victims of gender-based violence is a global concern.” The abuse of women is an urgent call for ubuntu, but we must lament that thirty years after ubuntu became a formative principle guiding the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) in South Africa, “one begins to question the whole philosophy of ubuntu, as it cannot be practiced by ignoring the sufferings of women.”10 How have three decades of global focus on the abuse of women and three decades of ubuntu’s application as a political principle failed so dramatically to decrease violence against women? How can we ensure our application of ubuntu over the next thirty years *does* significantly diminish violence against women?[[3]](#footnote-3)

**Part III**

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**Conclusion**

Despite thirty years of focused attention from the UN and other organizations, violence against women remains a stark global reality. Abraham and Prabha note, “in this frightening scenario, the angst of the women who are victims of gender-based violence is a global concern.” The abuse of women is an urgent call for ubuntu, but we must lament that thirty years after ubuntu became a formative principle guiding the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) in South Africa, “one begins to question the whole philosophy of ubuntu, as it cannot be practiced by ignoring the sufferings of women.”10 How have three decades of global focus on the abuse of women and three decades of ubuntu’s application as a political principle failed so dramatically to decrease violence against women? How can we ensure our application of ubuntu over the next thirty years *does* significantly diminish violence against women?

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2. Braithwaite, “Shame and criminal justice,” *Canadian Journal of Criminology* 42, no. 3 (2000): 281–298. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Braithwaite, “Shame and criminal justice,” *Canadian Journal of Criminology* 42, no. 3 (2000): 281–298. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Braithwaite, “Shame and criminal justice,” *Canadian Journal of Criminology* 42, no. 3 (2000): 281–298. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)