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MEDIA BRIEFING (15 June 2017)

HOW THE YOUTH AND FATHERS ARE IMPACTED BY PORNOGRAPHY

The month of June celebrates the family by acknowledging *THE YOUTH* (Youth day, 16 June) and the importance of *FATHERS* in our homes and communities (Fathers' day, 18 June). During this month, Cause for Justice (CFJ) is running a campaign focusing on the link between pornography and violence against women and children, as well as associated harms to individuals, relationships, families and society at large. Fathers have a key role to play in fighting this scourge in our society.

The time is NOW

We have chosen to do this now in the light of recent events that have highlighted violence, especially *sexual violence*, against women and children.

The issue of pornography's causal relationship to sexual violence remains a priority for CFJ due to the proposals in the Films and Publications Amendment Bill to legalise and decriminalise online distribution of pornography to internet users in South Africa. The Bill is currently being deliberated on in the National Assembly's Portfolio Committee on Communications (PCC).

Pornography and Sexual violence: What does the research say?

The link between sexual violence and pornography is often disputed and even slated by some. However, more and more studies show an undeniable link between pornography use and violence against women and girls.ⁱ This is of particular concern in South Africa where sexually violent crime is rife.

South Africa's pornography use

Equally concerning is that pornography use is on the rise, with South Africa breaking into the top 20 of all countries in the world on one of the largest hard-core pornography video sharing websites in the world (Pornhub).ⁱⁱ In addition, South Africa has the highest percentage in the world for accessing hard core pornography via mobile devices, with 73% of pornography users in South Africa accessing these materials from mobile devices such as phones or tablets.ⁱⁱⁱ

This trend is extremely concerning given the harmful effects of pornography, especially for young/adolescent minds. Most concerning is that some people brush this off as "boys will be boys" and it is even condoned by some as a rite of passage to becoming "a real man". Sadly, the reality is just the opposite. Pornography use creates a very warped perception of healthy sexuality, resulting in very real damage to the self-image of men and to their relationships with women.^{iv}

The role of the father

Now more than ever the strong leadership role of fathers is needed in our homes to protect and also to guide our youth, especially the boy child in honouring and protecting their mothers and

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sisters. Pornography, sexual violence and abuse is not a legacy any father would want for his son and especially not for his daughters.

Few fathers realise however, that pornography (a form of sexual exploitation) is a root cause - a fuel that creates the demand for and drives sexual violence in the form of abuse, sex trafficking etc.^v

Fathers who tolerate pornography in their own lives, in the home, in the lives of neighbours and friends or in society at large, implicitly approve of the sexual abuse of their wives and daughters.

The Call

This June we call on FATHERS to take a stand against the scourge of violence against women and children, we call on our YOUTH to demand a better future free of subjection to the endless barrage of digital pornographic imaging. We can break this vicious cycle in our society by saying 'NO' to pornography and 'YES' to healthy, honouring relationships that value and protect women and children.

The message going out to the fathers of the nation is loud and clear:

IF WE ARE SERIOUS ABOUT ERADICATING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND CHILDREN, WE CANNOT BE LAX ABOUT ERADICATING THE PRODUCTION, DISTRIBUTION AND CONSUMPTION OF PORNOGRAPHY IN OUR SOCIETY.^{vi}

[MEDIA BRIEFING ENDS]

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ENDNOTES SUBSTANTIATING FACTS REFERRED TO IN MEDIA BRIEFING:

ⁱ Research by Dr. Walter Dekeseredy has shown that **pornography teaches men to think of women as objects, not as people**. In a study with over 20,000 men, it was found that the more men view media where women are treated as objects rather than as people, the more they thought that **women really were merely things that existed to sexually please men**. In addition, the more men think of women as objects, **the more they also support violence against women**.

(Hald, G.M., Malamuth, N.N. & Lange, T. (2013) Pornography and sexist attitudes among heterosexuals. *Journal of Communication*, 63(4), 638-660. Doi:10.1111/jcom.12037

Wright, P.J. & Tokunaga, R.S. (2015) Men's Objectifying Media Consumption, Objectification of Women, and Attitudes Supportive of Violence Against Women. *Archives of Sexual Behavior*, doi:10.1007/s10508-015-0644-8)

Dr. Paul Wright and his research team analysed 22 studies on pornography use and sexual violence from 7 different nations and found that **pornography use and acts of sexual aggression were directly connected**. This connection held true for both men and women, and for verbal and physical aggression. Violent pornography was even more strongly linked to sexual violence.

(Wright, P.J., Tokunaga, R.S., & Kraus, A. (2015). A Meta-analysis of Pornography Consumption and Actual Acts of Sexual Aggression in General Population Studies. *Journal of Communication*. Doi:10.1111/jcom.12201)

After viewing over 500 studies to determine whether consumption of pornography caused gender based violence, Dr. Max Waltman of Stockholm University concluded that the weight of the evidence shows **that pornography causes gender based violence through most every methodology imaginable, using experimental and non-experimental studies, quantitative and qualitative studies, and samples of specific groups and samples of the general population.** Dr. Waltman describes the effects as not only statistically significant but robust.

(Waltman, M. (2014). *The politics of legal challenges to pornography*. Doctoral Dissertation. Available online: https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2539998)

* From the book, "*How Pornography Harms*" (2017), by John D. Foubert, Ph.D.

ii <http://www.pornhub.com/insights/2016-year-in-review>

iii <http://www.pornhub.com/insights/mobile-traffic>

iv <http://fightthenewdrug.org/how-porn-affects-your-sexual-tastes/>
<http://fightthenewdrug.org/how-porn-damages-your-sex-life/>
<http://fightthenewdrug.org/how-porn-can-hurt-your-partner/>
<http://fightthenewdrug.org/how-porn-warps-ideas-about-sex/>

v <http://fightthenewdrug.org/video-tedx-talk-the-porn-paradox/>

vi <https://www.facebook.com/Cause4Justice/videos/1303784516400739/?pnref=story>