

## VICTIM IMPACT STATEMENT – JUNE STEENKAMP

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At the time of writing this Victim Impact Statement, my memories go back to when my beautiful daughter Reeva Rebecca Steenkamp was born. Reeva was born a miracle; she entered our lives after medical experts predicted that I would have difficulty conceiving after a miscarriage. Barry and I had big dreams for Reeva.

From a young age she became a skillful equestrian and liked nothing better than helping Barry who managed stables and train racing horses. From a very young age, she had the ability to light up a room with her presence. When she fell off a horse at the age of twenty and had to spend months recovering, she decided to become a model and use her public profile to garner support for the victims of domestic abuse and rape.

In the 29 years that Reeva lived, she developed into a well-rounded young lady, completed her law degree and started a successful modelling career. She already started using her voice to advocate the plight of those that were exposed to domestic abuse and rape.

It has taken me the best part of 10 years to come to realize that Reeva appeared to have fulfilled her destiny during her life and more abundantly so, in her tragic death. Reeva's name and her demise continue to raise awareness around gender-based violence worldwide.

But did Reeva fulfil her dreams? I know she did not. Shortly before she died, she started discussing marriage and having children one day as part

of her dream. At 29 she was certainly mature enough and would have made a wonderful wife and mother.

Were our dreams for Reeva fulfilled? Of course not. We realized we were blessed as our daughter left us memories we could only be proud of. The massive hole left in our future, can never be filled by anyone else.

Recently, our family suffered a further blow. It is probably known that my dear husband Barry suffered a stroke 2 months after Reeva's trial began when he was confronted with more headlines while reading the newspaper. Reeva was a real daddy's girl and he was a doting father. She made an effort to sustain a strong relationship with us both and used to telephone her father on a Saturday and me on a Sunday. I have no doubt that Barry died of a broken heart. No parent should have to bury a child and most certainly not in the circumstances that prevailed in the demise of Reeva.

Following Reeva's death, Barry and I, both devastated, tried with whatever emotional reserves that remained to take care and support one another. And then the unthinkable happened: my Barry passed away on 14 September 2023. What he meant in my life and the extent of his support have now crystallized into what remains after: an unending black hole of pain and loneliness. I miss my partner and confidant dearly. The fact that he is reunited with Reeva offers some respite, but does not ease the terrific sense of loss that I have to come to terms with.

I am not attending Oscar's parole hearing, as I simply cannot muster the energy to face him again at this stage. Barry's demise had opened the

wounds in many ways caused by Reeva's death. I had forgiven Oscar long ago, as I knew almost instantly that I would not be able to survive if I had to cling to my anger.

I do not believe Oscar's version that he thought the person in the toilet was a burglar. In fact, I do not know anybody who does. My dearest child screamed for her life; loud enough for the neighbours to hear her. I do not know what gave rise to his choice to shoot through a closed door four times at somebody with hollow-point ammunition when I believe, he knew it was Reeva.

I do know that messages sent by Reeva, highlights huge anger issues.

Reeva's messages were read out in court by Francois Moller of the Hawks, obtained from Pistorius' and Reeva's cell phones.<sup>1</sup> Following a fight between Reeva and Oscar on 27 January 2013, Reeva wrote:

*"I'm scared of you sometimes and how you snap at me and of how you will react to me."*<sup>2</sup>

*"I'm the girl who fell in love with you but I'm also the girl who gets side-stepped when you are in a sh-t mood ... I get snapped at and told my accent and voices are annoying."*<sup>3</sup>

*"I was not flirting with anyone today. I feel sick that you should suggest it,"* adding that he *"f-ked up a special day for me by throwing a tantrum"*.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Fredericks and Wires "Texts reveal Steenkamp was 'scared' of Pistorius' anger" *New York Post* (24 March 2014) <https://nypost.com/2014/03/24/neighbor-who-heard-screams-takes-stand-at-pistorius-trial/> (Accessed 2023-03-27).

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

*"You do everything to throw tantrums in front of people"*<sup>5</sup>

In 2009 a case of assault was opened at Boschkop police station for the assault of Cassidy Taylor Memmory.<sup>6</sup> The victim required surgery to her ankle.

His girlfriend prior to Reeva, Samantha Taylor, described similar behaviour by Oscar: throwing tantrums, physical and emotional abuse – all of which were fully described in the book<sup>7</sup> published by her mother.

I do not know to what extent this behaviour still exists or were evident during his time of incarceration, but I am concerned for the safety of any woman should this not have been addressed in his rehabilitation.

I do not know which rehabilitation programs were attended by Oscar while incarcerated, but I sincerely hope that his rehabilitation included psychotherapy to deal with his temper and abusive behavior towards women. I also hope that specialist criminologists were engaged to assist in compiling a psychological profile that would assist in determining his risk for recidivism.

At this time, I am not convinced that Oscar has been rehabilitated.

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<sup>5</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.news24.com/news24/pistorius-locked-up-for-assault-20090914>

<sup>7</sup> Melinda Ferguson and Patricia Taylor "Oscar- an accident waiting to happen", MF Books Johannesburg 2014, p51,p66, p67

Rehabilitation requires someone to engage honestly with the full truth of his crime and the consequences thereof. Nobody can claim to have remorse if they are not able to engage fully with the truth. If someone does not show remorse, they cannot be considered to be rehabilitated.

If they are not rehabilitated, their risk of recidivism is high. I am informed that an inmate's remorse and the extent to which they are rehabilitated are taken into consideration at the time of making a parole decision.

It is my earnest wish that no-one should be subjected to gender-based violence. I hope that parole board panels will evaluate an inmate's rehabilitation by considering his/her engagement with the truth in determining the presence or absence of remorse.

My dear Barry left this world utterly devastated by the thought that he had failed to protect his daughter and therefore in his role as father, as he perceived it. The only hope he had left, was that Oscar would find it in himself to eventually tell the full truth. It is my hope that parole decisions treat the safety of women as the most important consideration by exercising their power judiciously.

The pain caused by the dastardly murder of Reeva, did not only include emotional trauma. It also included trauma that manifested physically as became evident in the accelerated deterioration in health for both Barry and myself.

When Reeva died, I was a 'young' 67 and Barry 70 years old. I can confirm that our lives were gravely impacted – physically, emotionally and financially.

Should it be decided that Oscar is sufficiently rehabilitated, it is my wish that the parole policies and procedures of the Department of Correctional Services be applied consistently in his release.

June Steenkamp

24 November 2023