

PHYSICAL EVIDENCE MUSEUM

July 1 – 6, 16:00 – 20:00

July 3, 12:00 pm – 8:00 pm
testimony reading marathon

Niekańska Street 34/2
(private apartment, entrance from Walecznych Street)



BALTIC
TRANSFER*
FESTIVAL

1.

With these I can go for an early morning run. With these I can stay late at practice, so I don't have to come home. With these I can dance till sunrise to escape the pain.

2.

I told my husband I wanted to go out of town for an arts event (I asked him if he wanted to come), he punched me in the head, then shoved me hard. I fell to the ground. He kicked me with hard-toed shoes. I managed to get away. I had bruises all over my body. I put on a long-sleeve blouse and went to the event. I wouldn't let it get to me. I took photos of the bruises on my belly, thighs, legs and arms. He spared my face.

3.

At the beginning of my studies, I decided to adopt a dog. I chose lean, black Soja – with the tail cut off with an ax. It was a bull's eye, I've never been happier. From the beginning, I thought Soja was afraid of men. I explained it with traumas. She did not sleep in the room where my then partner was, did not want to go for walks with him, did not let him touch her. One day, when I returned from my 12-hour job, she was not at home. My ex said that he lost her, that I have to stop crying, because eventually she will find herself at the „Paluch” [the dog shelter in Warsaw]. Fortunately, I managed to find her, scared near the Zawisza roundabout. Another time, during an argument, he kicked her so much that her tiny body flew to the far end of the room. After the breakup, it turned out that Soja is not afraid of men – she is afraid of one violent, cheating man. Now I am in a happy relationship and Soja cannot imagine a day without cuddling under the covers with my partner. My dog understood much faster than me who we are dealing with.

4.

Our dog, Flexio, witnessed it all: the fights, the cursing, the name-calling, my husband's brutal, sadistic, and hateful tone. The dog was there when my husband got violent. Whenever my husband started shouting and cursing, it would cower under a table or chair, or hide under the armchair in a corner. Or it would run out into the garden. Sometimes it would growl at my husband. It even snapped at him a few times. It was afraid of him. My husband would sometimes pour dry dog food into its bowl, with this funny little smile. “Just so you know who's the boss around here,” he'd say. It was supposed to be joke – but nobody ever laughed. It was chilling. It gave me a glimpse of what was going on in my husband's head, the way he saw us, as his family.

5.

There was no big use of the police. With other people around, my abuser behaved perfectly, even the police was clearly disappointed that they were called to a family conflict with no visible result. On the way out, a policeman noticed my husband's ice hockey equipment and asked: „Which club?” They looked at each another. My then husband answered with a smile so wide that my powerlessness grew out of proportions. I realised that I'm ABSOLUTELY alone against my abuser and the world, and I lost heart altogether.

6.

I took all sedative pills.

7.

After our divorce, the child's father was inviting me for a talk. We were sitting in a cafe, the conversation was unpleasant and I decided to leave. At that moment I received a punch in my head. My ears were ringing. Adrenaline, panic, the need to get away as soon as possible. Some men in the cafe held him back. I don't even remember how I got home. Only later I found out that the earring's leg was straightened on the side where I was punched. I tried to bend it back, but it never looked the same again. Can't get myself to wear these again.

8.

8

My story is on the other side of the door.



Whenever I see the number 8, even though I understand that it's just a number, my cells freeze. I resist the memories that the number 8 reminds me of but, no matter the context, the moment when I see or hear number 8 I get an anxiety attack. His birthday was on the 8th, we met for the first time on the 8th and celebrated it every year. Although many years have passed, the number still reminds me of something unpleasant and dangerous.

9.

Once upon a time, when I was 10, I didn't feel like eating dinner. I wasn't a fussy eater, I just wasn't hungry. My mom was irritated that day and it upset her so much that she screamed and wanted to hit me. I ran to the bathroom and locked it „on the handle” because there was no lock on our door. My mom tugged at the door, so I pulled the belt from my dressing-gown with my free hand and wrapped it behind the door handle and tied it to the radiator. My mother was furious and tugged the door handle until the belt was torn to shreds. She broke into the bathroom. I was sitting on a closed toilet. She started beating me blindly. Everywhere she could reach. It was summer. Then I went out into the yard in shorts to meet my friend. My entire thighs were swollen, bruised, and my arms were bruised. A friend asked me what happened, I simply said: – Mom got upset. „Oh, normally;” she replied. – Well, normally.

10.

I left my abuser after more than five years of living together. Sometimes, when I hold a soup ladle in my hands, the memories of rape episodes come back when a soup ladle or a champagne cork or some other object with sharper edges was pushed into my body. These memories are so painful that I seem to freeze remembering the pain and horror of it. In such moments I try to do some physical work or go out in the nature to save myself from them.

11.

My story is on the wall.



I come home. My husband is watching TV. When he hears me come in, he turns up the volume. “Could you please turn it down a bit,” I ask. He turns it up even more. I go to the kitchen. I see there's some food ready on a pan. I turn on the stove to heat it up for us. He rushes into the kitchen, grabs the pan and takes it to the pantry. “That's not for you!”, “Get the fuck out of here!” And then “Bitch.” “You fucking bitch.” I manage to keep down the tears. I'm hungry, so I make myself some noodles. A few hours later, I see my husband warming up “his” dinner and eating it all by himself. “My husband takes care of the house. He does the cooking.” That's the official version. “No one will believe you. He's such a nice guy.”

12.

When he was drunk, violence was especially brutal. That happened every week for more than two decades. When he was approaching home, I would look out of the window to figure out his level of drunkenness, to know how to behave. There was a time when I marked with colour the days in the calendar when he was drunk, and there were more and more of them. Till weeks where every single day in the calendar was coloured.

13.

When I was a child, my dad would sit in front of me with a wooden spoon while I was eating. When I could not eat anymore, he would hit me in the forehead until the plate was empty. If he left the kitchen for a bit, I would hide the food behind the couch or throw it out the window.

14.

A knife flew across the kitchen towards me. I was lucky that it didn't hit me and fell to the floor. The knife was thrown by my violent farther.

15.

As a child, I was raised by a single mother. Mom was quite impulsive. She lost her temper easily. She was quite aggressive in her gestures then. One day, when I was 16, we had an argument because she wouldn't let me leave the house (she never let me because she was „afraid for my safety“). During an argument, she smashed meat into pork chops. At one point, she turned to me with a meat pestle. I started running towards the door, she was chasing me. I ran out of the house and the moment she swung at me with a pestle, I shut the door and the pestle stuck in the door. At the height of my head. It was the first time I ran away from home. The traces of the pestle are still visible on Mom's door, and Mom says she has no idea where it got there from.

16.

I'm standing over the kettle in the kitchen and making myself a cup of coffee. It's a dark autumn morning; I have the light on. Reflected in the window, I see my husband stand quietly in the doorway. He makes a gun with his fingers and aims it at my back. He pulls the invisible trigger. I freeze. Shivers of fear run through my body. I'm dying. It's like he really killed me. I'm dying inside. I'm crumpling in on myself. I can't believe it! My baby? The love of my life? Shooting me in the back?

17.

Open the locker using both hands. My story is in the drawer above.



We'd been married over twenty years when we moved into our new house. I spent several years supervising the construction. It was a house built out of love, for love, with love. I didn't have to get up early that day. I went down to the kitchen to make myself a cup of coffee. My husband was finishing his breakfast; he was on a special diet so he ate his own meals. The French window was open. I was cold, so I shut it. I flinched when I heard him shouting right next to me: "What do you think you're doing, bitch! Open the window, bitch!" I was paralysed. "Calm down," I said. "I'm cold." "Open the fucking window, you bitch!" he yelled. "But I'm right here." "I'm having my breakfast." "But I want to have coffee with you," I tried to say. "Fuck off," he shouted. "Get outta here!" It was like he was talking to a dog!

"Don't shut the fucking window." And he threw it open again. I was really cold in my nightgown. "Put some clothes on!", "Just look at yourself!" He was yelling and spitting at me. Then he threw a mug of tea at me, with all his might.

I couldn't get myself together for a long time. I got dizzy spells and anxiety attacks. Everyone I met seemed hostile. Everything people say sounded aggressive, even if they were friends or people in the store or at work. At the police station, my husband denied everything: "I was just saying ,bitch.' I never said it to my wife." After the played him the recordings, he finally admitted it. "Yes, I did address my wife using offensive language. And I'm not proud of that." But that experience will stay with me FOREVER.

18.

You can read my story in the letter on the kitchen counter.



The first time he threw something at me (it was a fork, I think), I couldn't believe it was really happening. Since then, I've kept a couple of the fruits he hurled at me when I asked him to stop treating me the way he does. Talking gave way to shouting when he started insulting me and calling me names, often behind my back. He would stand behind me and hiss "you bitch", or "fuck you, whore." "You can't talk to me that way," I'd scream, and that's when he would start throwing things. Anything that was at hand. I ducked,

otherwise I would have been hit in the face, in the eye, or had my glasses broken. Then he would lock himself in his room and play music at full blast. Afterwards, I often had dizzy spells, anxiety attacks, and I lost my balance. One day, the ambulance came and took me to the hospital. In the hospital report, they wrote: "response to severe stress occasioned by marital quarrel." Another time after he threw something – a mug or an apple, I can't remember – I fell and broke a tooth. No, he wasn't there when it happened. No, he didn't push me. It was because of him, but he wasn't there when I lost my balance. There's no accounting for the way you react to stress. I tripped and fell because I was being abused. It was my body's response to stress. So what if it was put off for a couple of minutes? It's been three years since he moved out. I'm slowly getting my balance back. I haven't tripped and fallen for three years now. I haven't lost my balance once.

19.

Remove the box from the shelf and open it.



The smell in his car was very intense. Suffocating, like the fear and feeling of worthlessness that I often experienced in his company. He drove fast. He drove a car with great confidence. He would often start driving before I could even fasten my seat belts. Now all the artificial smells make me sick.

20.

I received the book as a gift for the legal counsel's oath. I forgot about her completely. Recently someone from my legal office found it and put it on my desk. Dedication is the quintessence of how I was manipulated at the time. I only saw the „dedication” and this – I am not sure anymore – either was enough for me or it obscured all other behaviours. Back then, I was not aware that I was being exploited emotionally, physically and intellectually. I had the feeling that it was not as it should be, but I waited for the promised stabilisation, normal life together. I was addicted to person without a doubt. The mechanism was simple: words, e-mails, messages, letters, gifts, trips, flowers, concerts, possibility of professional development and ensuring exclusivity. Nice, easy life and complete cut off from others. A life full of falsehoods and slippery excuses. My partner's actions had such an effect that in my spare time, when he was not at home, I would lie and wait for him or a message from him. I couldn't do anything else. He was extremely sensitive, attentive, always willing to help, he created a sense of security – everything on his own terms. He was a genius manipulator, addicted to sex and pornography. I let him do anything. He could do anything with my body too, play with it. I don't know how to respond to it and think about it objectively that it was something bad for me. When I told him about the pregnancy, he offered to terminate it and offered full help and support in this regard. It would have an impact on his professional life and how others judge him. I never denied him anything.

21.

Put on the headphones and press Play.



I was doing my homework on a closed piano because we didn't have a table. My little sister was studying in music school. My step mum decided that she had to play piano at that right moment. I needed just five more minutes to finish an exercise. Step mum pushed me off the chair and when I went to tell my dad, she started screaming, saying that I feel off on my own. When I tried to take my books off the piano, she pushed me again. I pushed her back. She called my dad, who rushed in and started choking me. He said: „I won't let you treat my wife like this”.

22.

These are not just tickets to see my favourite band, which you tore apart so I could not go because „I have a bad taste in music”. You were also tearing apart my self-awareness and my personality every single day.

23.

The night my dad came back home drunk for the first time, that's what I remember. My mother and I stayed up all night and waited for him. Around 4 am he came back and put on full volume the song „Jenny” from that particular album. I will always associate it with the beginning of the wave of harm. When I was a kid it was my favourite album.

24.

Call the number placed on the yellow pillow.



I had no strength to fight anymore. I was silent. He snatched the remote out of my hands. The next second his hands were around my throat and he pushed me into the couch. At that moment I closed my eyes and was with my family. After the choking he slowly got up and went up to the window. Very slowly, in a demonstrating manner, he was taking the flower pots down from the windowsill. He opened the 4th floor window, as if about to jump out of it, and I, instead of escaping, running away and calling the police, with shaking legs tried to get up to calm him down.

During our three-year relationship, I was always to blame for all our failures and problems. His breakdowns, outbursts of anger, endless demands, mockery, punishments, being pinned to the floor – this was just how he expressed his helplessness caused by my inflexibility.

Press 1 to find out why I didn't leave him.

Press 2 to find out why I left.

Press 3 to find out how has my life changed after I left?

Option 1

- Because I felt sorry for him

- Because I cared about him

- Because I was afraid of him and how it would be without him

- Because I thought they would blame me

- Because we had interesting discussions

- Because when we first met, I completely lost my head for him. I've never experienced anything like this before. He told me about a wonderful future that awaits us together. I was sad to give it up.

- Because he threatened to kill himself. And if our relationship doesn't work out, it will kill me too.

Thanks for listening to my story. It means a lot to me.

Option 2

I quit after reading the brochure „Is It Violence?” and I understood that I was answering „yes” to every question. It was the first time I realised that I was in a toxic relationship. Before, I had lived under the illusion that violence or bullying was a black eye. I pulled myself together, packed all his things and brought them to his mom. He would never moved out himself.

Thanks for listening to my story. It means a lot to me.

Option 3

- I can breathe! I can relax whenever I feel like it.

- I can go wherever I want, meet whoever I want, feel and look what I want and cry when I want to.

- I don't have to have sex when I don't feel like it, nor feel bad about it.

- I'm free! Now I can talk about my experiences without tears, without anger and without blaming myself.

Thanks for listening to my story. It means a lot to me.

25.

In my diary there is almost nothing about him.

26.

My notebook is empty. It hurts so much that I am not able to write it down. I don't even see a point. It feels that by describing the situation, the world is going to get only darker.

27.

Before getting spanked, I had to put my palm on the Bible and promise that I will never do it again.

28.

Open the balcony door. My story is on the glass.

It is still a painful subject to me. I am not able to write my cool texts anymore, I have no creative ideas, it has killed any creativity I used to have in me. I am not able to create anything because it all goes on – two-year long court case, constant interrogations from social and child services, battle over child custody, psychiatric and psychological examinations that court has ordered meeting each demand of the perpetrator. I, not the perpetrator, is being torn and dragged around all the possible institutions. It's him, not me that the court, social and child services are serving. I am an empty, functioning being. I don't have an item. I am an item that the system is trying to turn into something I'm not.

29.

Listen.



This is my favourite chair that I still love to sit on in the evenings thinking about a day that passed, drink wine and read books. However, sometimes when I look at it, I remember how my drunken husband tried to choke me. Just before that he threw our 2-month old baby onto the edge of the chair. I was laying on the floor whilst his hands were squeezing my neck, and either looking into his mad eyes and thinking that he is going to kill me, or looking at the child, who could fall off the chair edge any second. At one moment I gathered up my strength to push him away from me, start screaming, grab my child and call for help. Later, my loved ones said that I probably was the one who provoked him to do that. When I left after two months, our mutual friends were saying "how could I have done this to such a kind man".

30. – 32.

My story is in the front of the exhibits.



He wouldn't let me cut bangs. I was holding it in for six years and one day finally did it. I was scared to go home. He is not talking to me for three days already.

If you cut your hair short, I will break up with you.

Father was screaming that he is going to cut off my brother's penis. I heard that from the other room. We were very young.

33.

„Your tears mean nothing to me.“

34.

„I'll kill myself if you leave me.“ I left. And he is alive and well.

35.

Little Owl – this is the necklace my fiancé gave to me. I wore it almost all the time, then it hung on the window in my room so it had to see everything. How he called me names, tormented me, raped me, choked me on the floor until I passed out. Maybe I even had it around my neck then.

36.

He often commented on how I should behave: „A good girlfriend will wear that bikini on the beach that turns everyone’s heads”. He wanted other men to envy him. I felt like a trophy, not his girlfriend.

37.

First relationship is often associated with childish happiness. In my case it’s associated with emotional manipulation. Because I didn’t agree to sleep with him, I was given an ultimatum – I had to at least send nude photos because that’s what all girlfriends do, especially ones who don’t satisfy their partner physically. I had nobody to ask for advice. Later he used this to blackmail me.

38.

My story is inside.



My husband has ways to make me dependent on him. He communicates it with his body. When he’s happy, I get love and sex. When he’s not, he pushes me away. This is the marital mattress. I crave physical contact with my husband. He turns his back on me. I cuddle up to him, gently like I always do. “Get your hands off me,” I hear him say. I grow numb. I freeze. I wait. I wait. I forgive him. And I keep waiting: for days, weeks, months. We share a bed every night. Closeness and warmth. I feel the heat of his body. His breath. His smell. My senses respond to his presence next to me. To the memories. I feel I’m sexually dependent on him. I desire him. It doesn’t matter where I am: at home, outside, when we’re going out, when we’re in the car together. At home, we keep passing each other by. When he comes out of the bathroom naked, and when he has a jacket on, I wait. I wait. I get restless. I often go out, to see family and friends, or on business. I go out for a beer or a coffee; I go out dancing. I put on high heels and cheap bangles and lace. I do it for myself, to feel pretty, so nobody can see that – even though everything looks fine from the outside – the man I love is pushing me away, denying me love, tenderness and happiness. Can anyone understand that? Can anyone understand the effect passive sexual abuse can have on a loving wife?

I like sex. I’m not getting any, though. Some marriage. I’m suffering. Sometimes I have too much to drink; sometimes I get provocative. Sometimes I laugh, sometimes I get unbearably irritable and short-tempered. But every day, always, I come home to him. I take pills and a hard drink to fall asleep. He sees my pain, but he doesn’t care. “I don’t give a shit,” he says. Then there’s the curses: “You slut.” “Don’t speak to me like that!” I scream at the top of my voice. I’m waiting. Waiting for a bit of warmth. Waiting for love. He turns his back on me. “I know you’re waiting but I don’t care.” He knows what he’s doing. He’s doing it on purpose. How do I convince the judge that it’s mental abuse: passive, conjugal sexual abuse. Denial. Neglect. Passive abuse is hurtful. “The applicant is not afraid of her husband, therefore no abuse has occurred,” the prosecutor writes back.

We’re together. It’s wonderful. We’re making love. I’m so happy. Then he stands up and says, “Sorry, I have my needs. Unless you want me to go see a booker.” “You don’t want me to go see a booker, do you?” I feel so objectified. I feel he’s using me. All the magic is gone! I freeze. I fall to pieces. I’m speechless! I’m in shock! Is that what our marriage is to him? Something that keeps him from going to “see bookers”? I don’t get it. It feels like he’s plunging a knife in my heart! How do I convince the prosecutor that this is abuse? “The applicant is not afraid of her husband, therefore no abuse has occurred,” says the prosecutor.

I go to bed late. I’m tired. It’s cold. I try to be quiet. I slip under the sheets, but he was just pretending to be asleep: he roughly yanks the covers away. I’m left exposed. I gently pull the covers back over myself. He gives them another tug. He’s very strong. I seem to hear him laughing at me. “Stop it,” I plead. “I’m cold.” Then he rolls over and kicks me in the back as hard as he can. I fall to the ground. He pulls the covers over himself. I go get a blanket and try to sleep. I end up lying awake all night, even though I’m very tired.

39.

Take a peek under the bed.



I found this box at home under the bed. I was 11 or 12. I understood what it was, I didn’t touch it or tell anyone because I thought that it belonged to my parents. Only after a few years I found out that my father was using it with my sister, she was 15. I feel terrible that I can’t go back to the moment when I found the box. If I would have taken that box to my mum or at least run around the house with it, perhaps the atrocity would have been discovered sooner.

40.

It was evening, after the bath, I put on this pyjamas ... ready to sleep. The husband came back drunk as usual ... more than usual (it happened quite often) ... and the insults, humiliation began. There was also a fisticuffs and what I fear the most ... choking me with a quilt, a stool ... he pressed me between the cupboard and the sofa ... he is big and strong ... he acted like a man possessed ... after a few attempts to free myself (I took a moment when he stopped for a moment) I ran away like I was standing at my sister-in-law ... there I found a temporary shelter.

41.

It's a quiet morning. I go to the kitchen for my morning coffee. It's a weekend, I'm in no rush. It's a warm summer day. I'm wearing a strapped silk nightie, or maybe it's cotton. I hear a barked "Put some clothes on! You look awful!" He waves me away with the back of his hand, a dismissive "get out of here." He turns his head in disgust and looks away. "Get the fuck out of here," he hisses, then looks me straight in the eye and pretends to retch, sticking two fingers in his mouth as if to induce vomiting, like I was making him sick.

42.

I was „trained“ to implement my partner's life plan. Perfect „life after life“ after his divorce. It turned out that I was supposed to be perfectly in line with his idea of his wife. In the morning he did not let to sleep for too long, he told me to exercise (everything is fine beside jogging), water and work on time. Only porridge with vegetables for lunch. I am happy to prepare! Sports, reading, talking, but only about his horse – politics. Meetings with friends and all family events – only with his friends and family. A sterile, righteous life for the realisation of the plan. The dress I am passing on „did not pass“, I was unattractive in it, he did not imagine his wife like this. I could wear something else.

43.

I was wearing my dress when he lunged at me with his fists, pushed to the floor and kicked with hard boots while I was lying down. The next day I had bruises all over my body, I took my little daughter and moved to my mother. I had nothing. Mom looks at it with despair and concern. She sees him coming, begs, promises. And she says – it will only get worse. Do not do this „it's either me or him“ – I choose him, someone whom I loved above all else, and who then, after my mother's death, when I am defenceless, lonely, will deceive me, betray me and abandon me after almost 30 years.

44.

Things that in his eyes made me attractive, made me feel like an object. I looked like a child – was that sexy?

45.

When I was second pregnant, my husband and mother-in-law abused me. When my water broke in the fourth month of pregnancy, in the hospital my husband gave me a rosary to pray.

46.

I drank two glasses of boiled water and forgot to boil more. My stepmom punished me by dragging me by my hair. She did that often. Later when braiding my hair she would ask why I have bald spots.

47.

Lie down on the bed and look at the wall in front of you.



To make sure I grew up properly, my dad put CCTV in my room.

48.

When we were kids, mum would always buy us new stickers to make us feel better after her fights with dad. She couldn't afford anything more than that.

49.

Father wanted to give my brother to the orphanage because „there was something wrong with him”. He was just scared.

50.

Drive the Lego train on the tracks.



I was pregnant with my youngest child. My man didn't like my oldest son's behaviour and attitude. He often used it as an excuse for aggressive talks and screaming around. I vividly remember how I had to cover my son with my big stomach to not let the man get him. My son was just calmly playing with legos.

51.

„Why are you even trying, you will never be a dancer, you can't even do a split and you have a crooked back,” said my dad. I was dancing biphop, where the split wasn't even necessary.

52.

Follow the red cable and open the basket.



53.

Go outside and look behind.

No one will believe you, Zuzanna

54.

Go down the stairs and go around the corner.

Danuška, fuck you. Champions.

**THANK YOU FOR VISITING MUSEUM.
YOU CAN GO OUT FROM THE YARD TO THE STREET.**

PHYSICAL EVIDENCE MUSEUM

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LATVIJAS JAUNĀ
TEĀTRA INSTITŪTS

