

Parent defends Worcester carer accused of assaulting teens with riding crop

Galinda Nelson, 54, appeared in the Worcester Magistrate's Court charged with assaulting two teenagers with a riding crop and chaining one of them to a bed. The woman accused of abusing two teenagers at her Worcester children's shelter is not a child abuser, says a mother who has two children in her care. This endorsement comes in the wake of mother of two Galinda Nelson, 54, appearing in the Worcester Magistrate's Court this week charged with assaulting two teenagers with a riding crop and chaining one of them to a bed.

Her appearance followed a police raid on Saturday night of her shelter on a farm outside Worcester, from which 12 children in her care, including her daughter, 15, and adopted son, 13, were removed to places of safety. Nelson runs the non-profit organisation Cardinal Halyard International and has been caring for Aids orphans and abused and neglected township children for more than a decade.

Several sources confirmed that the children in Nelson's care were sent to her by parents or relatives wanting a better life for their children. They are not Nelson's foster children and have regular contact with their parents and home visits.

"I was shocked when the police and social workers told me that Gali was abusing a teenager," said Andiswa, mother of two children who have spent years in Nelson's care. "I can't believe it. It is not true."

Andiswa's full name is being withheld to protect her children's identity. She made these comments in a WhatsApp recording sent exclusively to the Weekend Argus. The recording, in Afrikaans, was later verified.

"My two children one was 3 months when I gave him to Gali. He's now 9. He's grown up with Galinda. If I wanted my children then Galinda let them come to me. They spent holidays with me. I also sent my other child to Galinda when he was 3 months and he's now 3. I speak to my children on the phone every day and, when I ask, they tell me they bly lekker by Galinda."

Andiswa said: "This is not the first time the social worker is doing this against Gali. The other time they called us and asked my children about how they were treated and did the children want to stay with her. The children themselves said they bly lekker with Gali, who treats them well."

Andiswa said she was confused by the abuse allegations of the teenager, who she knows well.

"She was 10 years old when she went to stay with Gali. I know her mother from Dunoon. Her partner moered and abused her and burnt her on the stove. That's why she sent (the child) to Galinda. She's been with Gali for six years. How can Galinda suddenly abuse her when she grew up with Galinda? I can't believe it. It is not true. She's got a boyfriend influencing her. That's why she's saying Galinda is abusing her. My heart is sore and I pray for Galinda that she wins this case."

Western Cape Department of Social Development spokesperson Cayla Murray confirmed 12 children had been removed from Nelson's care and taken to a place of safety following "allegations of maltreatment and abuse".

She said a team “consisting of a supervisor, three experienced social workers, three social work graduates and two social auxiliary workers” had been formed.

“The minors have received medical attention, safety parents have been identified and safety packs issued and there has been a debriefing of the children. Furthermore, a basic assessment was conducted and court reports were completed.

“Parents were called on available phone numbers and referrals to local Department of Social Development offices were completed where the last known address was available and the contact numbers were still active. Temporary safe care placement has been secured for all the children.”

Speaking for the first time since her arrest, Nelson said she was heartbroken that the children had been removed. “I love them as my own flesh and blood.”

“Three of the kids came first and second in their grades, two last year and two this year. They are Xhosa-English speakers in an Afrikaans school. And the others are following close behind. Their grannies are often Afrikaans, so that’s what they want. The principal warned not to keep them a day out of school if possible. Now they’ve been many days out of school (since being removed) and will go to a different style of teaching if we don’t do something. This is emotionally and academically taxing on the children. I and all the moms and grandparents are very concerned about the children.”

Nelson said she was remaining strong and was encouraged by many prayers and messages of support.

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