

## **The silence is deafening: Increasing violence on LGBTI Youth in South African Townships.**

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Almost on a weekly basis Irantí-org deals with yet another LGBTI young person who has been either expelled from school or worse; brutally murdered. With the deafening silence on main stream media and by our politicians, one is tempted to say that the LGBTI youth are the forgotten generation of this country. Continuously our organization is presented and reports on the human rights violations of LGBTI Youth in our schools and Townships yet the seriousness these human violations are ignored. South Africa prides itself for having the most progressive constitution in the world, the constitution unequivocally promises to uphold the dignity of every citizen. This beautiful document and its commitments however, are not accessible to the LGBTI community in South Africa.

In the education system, heteronormative uniform policies force LGBTI school learners to fit into the gender binary and their failure to comply often results in victimization or expulsion. In the North West Province, a learner was victimized for refusing to wear a school dress. The very same learner was sexually assaulted by a teacher at the school because she was a lesbian. Irantí-org is documenting the case and lobbying government to change the uniform policy. Another learner was expelled from school because of she was a lesbian. These stories are not unique and new but an ongoing yet growing ill-treatment of LGBTI youth in our education system.

Another concerning trend are the rising murders of LGBTI youths in our townships. Last month, one lesbian youth was stabbed to death after on her way home in Katlehong. In the same neighbourhood, a young gay youth was stabbed to death outside his home, after refusing to leave with the perpetrator. In the Vaal region, a young woman fondly known as Pasca was kidnapped, raped and brutally murdered with her genitals cut off in December 2015. No arrests have been made. Still in the



Vaal region, a friend of the late Pasca was kidnapped and raped around the same time. Another lesbian was raped after Vaal Pride. After opening a case, the perpetrator was released after 3 days and it unclear whether he was charged.

In the North West, A trans\* woman was attacked with stones and beaten up with a glass bottle while at her home with friends. The man then proceeded to threaten the woman saying, “you are a man and I am going to beat you and kill your gay friends”. This story is not unique to the North West, at a MacDonalds in Ghandi square in Gauteng, two South African men and one Nigerian man beat up a gay youth while the staff of the franchise looked on and laughed. These harrowing stories are but a few of the many narratives of dehuamnization and violence that LGBTI youth and the community at large face in the education system, the private and puplic sphere of South Africa.

The brilliant actress and trans\* activist, Leverne Cox believes “Justice is what love looks like in public.” Increasingly, the rise of discrimination and bullying of LGBTI school learners and the unfortunate violent murders in our townships require bold steps towards justice. If justice is what love looks like in public and yet there is no justice for LGBTI youth in South Africa, then what does this say about who South Africa loves?