



THE ROCK OF HOPE ESWATINI SEPTEMBER 2020 NEWSLETTER



Independent and the LGBTIQ+

On the 6th of September 1968 the kingdom of Eswatini became a self-government country, which meant it was no longer colonized by British people. According to the oxford dictionary, independence can be define as "the time when a country gains freedom from political control by another country."

This year marks 51 years of Eswatini being an independent country. My question is "shouldn't independence come with freedom, freedom of expression, and freedom of one expressing his or sexuality without fear?" From where I view things, yes the country got its independence, but only a few became independent while others are still enslaved by country's laws which deprives them the full potential of enjoying their human rights.

Legally as the LGBTI community we are not independent as the government claims. Eswatini has been failing to acknowledge the existence of lesbians, gays, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) people in the country. Therefore we still have colonial common laws such as the Sodomy Act of 1907 which criminalizes same sex sexual relations between men.

In as much as this law has never been used before but it has put lives of LGBTI persons in such great risks of stigma and discrimination. Moreover, this law has caused isolation and unacceptance, LGBTI people are being rejected by the society, families, church and workplace. The rejection has led to high suicidality, drug abuse and mental health illness in the LGBTIQ+ community.

What really happened was that we as an African society left the frying pan (colonization) and jumped right into the fire (culture, religion and beliefs). We have built into our systems a sense of colorism, misogyny and downward hatred towards each other as black people especially towards the LGBTI community and the perpetrator of all these are the laws that criminalizes same sex relationships, expectations of the society and their beliefs, religion and culture. If changing the name of the country is that easy, why is it hard to have a constitutional review, hear the outcry of citizens of the country and change laws that deprive our citizens their human rights?



September is the month of Bi-erasure Visibility. Though it is something that is not talked about or addressed, bisexuality is a common thing in Eswatini and with that comes Bi-erasure and Biphobia. Bi-erasure can be defined as the pervasive problem in which the existence of legitimacy of bisexuality is questioned or denied outright yet bi-phobia is the dislike of or prejudice against bisexual people. People are allowing themselves to explore their sexuality besides gay, lesbian or heterosexual, some identify as bisexual which means that they are attracted to both sexes. However, the lack of bi-visibility still continues to be a problem or accepted in the society= has and still destroys the bisexual community in various ways.

Biphobia can lead to people denying the realism of bisexuality, claiming that people who identify as bisexual are not genuinely bisexual and that they “in transition” to being homosexual or that they are unable to pick a side which is considered to make them confused to the society at large. Instead of being a community of people willing to accept and understand each other as minority group, we have taken the very heteronormative standards that have been used to diminish our visibility and acceptance and we have made them an integral part of our dealings within the LGBTIQ+ community which makes us no better than the people who call us demons.

As the LGBTIQ+ community we need to educate ourselves and understand on our fellow members who despite being of the same social minority are different in ourselves. By doing this we can truly embrace the values and essence behind the words “independence” as well as “rainbow flag”.

The Media and LGBTI Coverage

Sexual orientation, gender identity and sexual practices are still considered main factors that perpetrate violation, stigma and discrimination. The media has also played a role in perpetrating stigma and violation putting the lives of LGBTIQ+ people at risk, by misrepresenting the LGBTIQ+ people.

However, the media can also be used in a positive way to promote visibility of LGBTIQ+ people, educate the public and making sure that they understand diversity in terms of sexual orientation.

Changing the public’s perceptions on LGBTIQ+ people can be difficult but much easier if the press would avoid using negative and offensive language towards LGBTIQ+ person, but use appropriate language and focus on contributing to sustain social inclusivity and promote equality in human rights.

Positive reporting on LGBTIQ+ people will not only help in changing people’s perception on LGBTIQ+ people, but will also help in changing laws which are not in favour of the LGBTIQ+ community. Moreover, give people the understanding that LGBTIQ+ people do not want “special human rights” but want equal rights as heterosexuals.



However, we cannot blame journalists for the errors they make or the way they address the LGBTIQ+ community as they might lack knowledge on how to refer to the LGBTIQ+ community. What we have to do is educate them on how to address the LGBTIQ+ community so we end gender stereotypes.

Educating media houses on LGBTIQ+ people, on how to report on LGBTIQ+, which pronouns and nouns to use when addressing LGBTIQ+ people would play a virtual role in eliminating Transphobic, Homophobic and Biphobic stereotype. Headlines such as “**gay father prevented from seeing his son**” and “**no tolerance to abortion and LGBTIs**” already portrays the LGBTI as abnormal people who are up to no good and that causes the society to treat LGBTI people like outcasts. When you look into these articles or read them you will get to see that the content is slightly different from the headline.

THINK ABOUT IT!!!!

Independence is supposed to come with free, freedom of speech and freedom of expression. Why do we still have colonial laws that deprive us some of our human rights as citizens of the country? ARE WE REALLY INDEPENDENT, DO WE HAVE FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION???





How To End Gender Stereotypes?

Gender stereotype is mostly experienced by the LGBTI community and females, this is because of gender, which is defined as the community's expectation based on biological sex. Eradicating clichés based on sex should be our first priority in any society. The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights defines gender stereotype as a generalized view or preconception about attributes, or characteristics that are or ought to be possessed by women and men or the roles that should be performed by men and women.

Sexist and homophobia attitudes play a major role in increasing gender stereotype, about homosexual people. Gender stereotype limits the LGBTIQ+ community to exercise their full potential, it limits LGBTIQ+ persons from developing themselves, their skills, and it also limits them when it comes to attributing professional skills. Positive content and personally contact of with LGBTIQ+ people to clear out misconceptions might reduce stereotypical beliefs. Moreover, clarifying the LGBTIQ+ acronyms definition would also help heterosexual people to understand the LGBTIQ+ community.

ACRONYMS

L – Lesbian: This term refers to a woman or female who is sexually and emotionally attracted to other females or women. Under lesbians we have:

Femme - Which refers to a lesbian woman who confirms to and reclaims femininity

Butch – Which refers to a lesbian woman whose appearance and behavior are seen as traditionally masculine.

G – Gay: A man who is sexually and emotionally attracted to other men. Under gay men we have:

Top: This refers to a gay man who is masculine.

Bottom: This refers to a gay man who is more feminine.

B – Bisexual: This term describes a person who is sexually and or emotionally attracted to both males and females.

T – Transgender: This is a broad term that refers to individuals whose gender, or self-identification as a man or woman, does not match their biological sex.

Some transgender people describe deep feelings of being trapped in the wrong biological body. It is a term that includes transsexual and transvestites.

Transgender VS Transsexual and Transvestites

Transgender woman: Is someone who was assigned as a male at birth but who identifies as a woman. She might take steps to transition, but these steps do not necessarily involve surgery or physical alterations. She may dress as a woman, or feminine names.

Transgender man: this refers to someone who was designated female at birth but who identifies as a male. He might take steps to transition, but these steps do not necessarily involve surgery or physical alterations. He might also dress up as a man or use masculine name.

Transsexual: this term refers to a person who desires to physically transition to the sex that corresponds with the gender with which he/she identifies. A transsexual might undergo gender reassignment surgery.

Transvestite: a person, especially a man who gets pleasure from dressing in the clothes associated with opposite sex.

Q – Queer: This is an umbrella term that refers to someone who is not straight or cisgender.

I – Intersex: An intersex is a person who naturally was born both with two sex organs, a penis and vagina.

A – Asexual: this refers to individuals who do not experience or experience a low level of sexual desire. People of different sexual orientations and gender identities can be asexual.

P – Pansexual: This term describes a person who is sexually, romantically or emotionally attracted to people regardless of their sex or gender identity.

D – Demisexual: this term describes someone who can only experience sexual attraction after an emotional bond or romantic bond has been formed.