



TRANSGENDER AWARENESS WEEK



Transgender is an umbrella term that defines people who do not conform to the sex assigned at birth or biological sex. Many transgender people experience gender dysphoria, and some seek medical treatments such as hormone replacement therapy, sex reassignment surgery, or psychotherapy. Some cannot undergo the surgery or hormonal treatment because of financial or medical reasons, but not all of them desire the treatment or the surgery. Transsexual refers to a person who desires to physically transition to the sex that corresponds with the gender with which he/she identifies. A transsexual person might undergo gender reassignment surgery where the anatomical features of the gender and sex assigned at birth are removed. Some might take steps to transition, but these steps do not necessarily involve surgery or physical alterations, they may dress as a woman, or feminine use names.

In many southern African countries transgender people are not legally protected from any sort of violation and discrimination. They have little or no recognition because the African society is still focusing on the lesbians and gays and they are still learning to embrace and accept, so when it comes to transgender they are still confused. It is even worse that the justification and exclusion of the society is still justified by the beliefs, culture and religion which shows that even though we are in the 21st century, the society at large still is mentally living in the 20th century.

Many transgender people have a history related to suicidal ideation and possibly attempts, this is due to the discrimination they face in areas such as the workplace, in the society and at home. This is because people lack or have little knowledge when it comes to transgender people which has led to misgendering, discrimination and stigma towards transgender people. Transphobia has always been a barrier that has prevented transgender people from succeeding at work and social institutions, as some have had to drop out of social institutions (universities) and are unemployed because their national identity cards do not match their gender identity.

There is also a form of discrimination and stigma towards the Transgender community that is not usually addressed. This kind of Transphobia is built on microaggressions and comments that a number of gay, lesbian and bisexual people direct towards members of the transgender community. In the end a lack of acceptance and understanding from within the LGBTIQ+ community leads to the isolation of Transgender people from said community and the fear of owning the pride in their identity.

The spirit of the rainbow flag is the building of all-around true acceptance and understanding of each other, the kind of understanding we never got from our families and the outside world at large. We as a community need to warmly embrace our transgender brothers and sisters and understand who they are and where they come from. By doing this we can truly face this oppressive society without fail and garner the respect, recognition and overall acceptance the LGBTQI+ deserves as human beings on this planet just trying to get by thus embracing the spirit of the rainbow flag.

One legal issue is recognition of gender which is a current concern for all the LGBTIQ+ community. LGBTI people should have the same civil rights as everyone else. Health insurance coverage for transitioning related medical and surgical treatment is a political issue, and potentially a bigger one. Availability of treatment and insurance coverage is important for young transgender people. Delaying puberty and/or beginning hormonal treatment to allow them to go through puberty according to how they identify is critical. After puberty takes place it can't be reversed. Expensive surgery later can't come close to accomplishing the same things as going through puberty the right way the first time. Of course risks and costs of future related surgery are prevented as well.



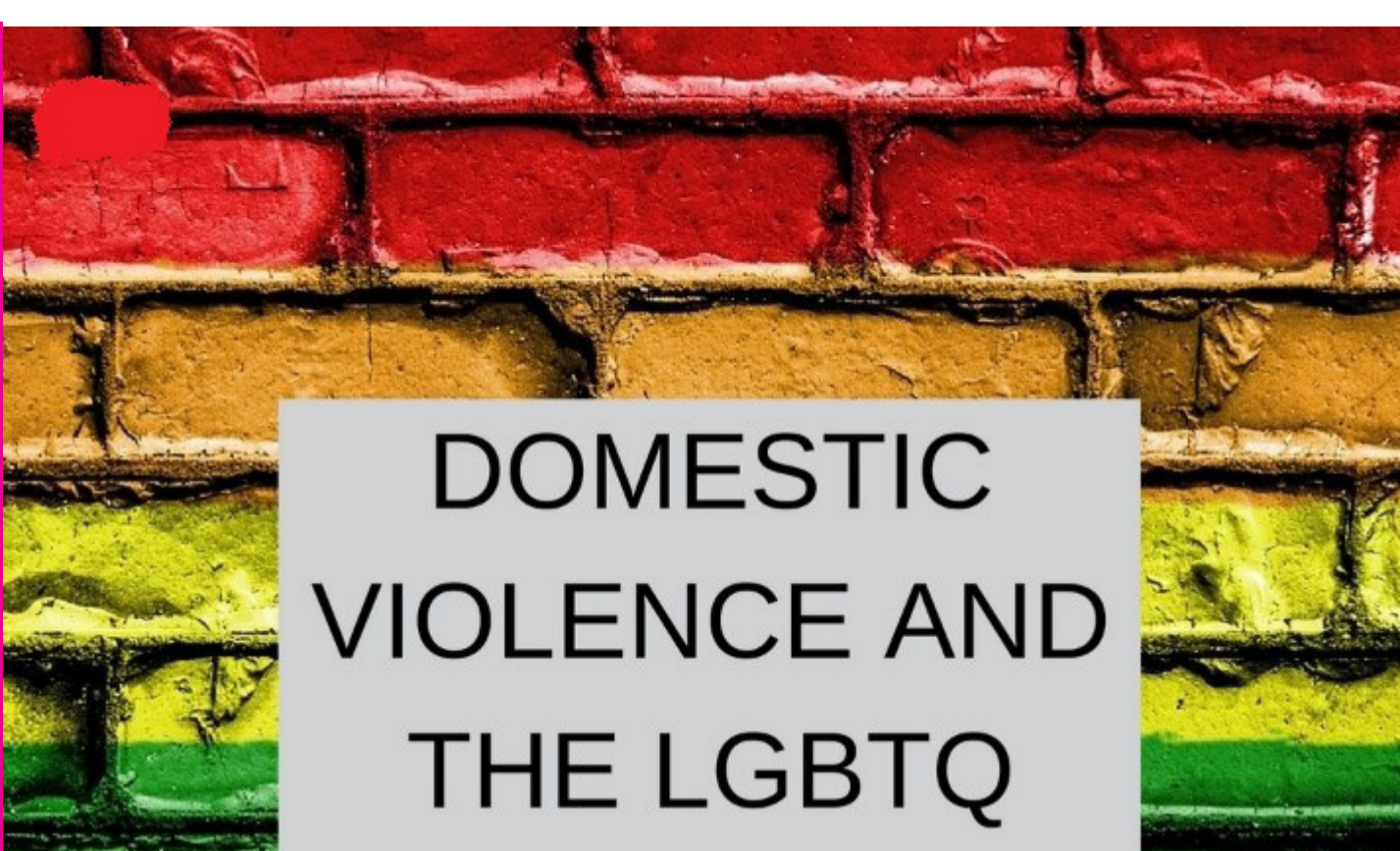
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RECOGNIZING DOMESTIC VIOLENCE
IN LGBTQ+ RELATIONSHIPS

16 Days of Activism to End Gender Based Violence

The 16 days of activism to end gender based violence is a strategy to end violence against women and children. However, this campaign turns to exclude the experiences or existence of lesbian, bisexual and transgender women, yet they also face disproportional violence and discrimination at the hands of both strangers and intimate partners. LGBT people are at a disturbingly elevated risk of homicidal violence, highlighting the increased risk that lesbian, bisexual and transgender women face because of gender based discrimination.

GBV is a reality affecting women, LGBT people who do not fit within the narrow parameters of the assigned societal gender roles. Gender roles, appearance and toxic masculinity lead to shocking violence. In as much as LGBTIQ+ people have stride in fight for equality, but because of the colonial law which does not only criminalize same sex acts, but perpetuate negative attitude towards LGBTIQ+ people has resulted in LGBTIQ+ people being victims of gender based violence. This has resulted to LGBTIQ+ victims of GBV not reporting their cases because the law does not favour LGBTIQ+ people.



DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND THE LGBTQ

A "Are We Doing Alright?" study was undertaken in Eswatini 2016 and published in 2019 which depicts the realities of violence, mental health and access to healthcare related to sexual orientation and gender identity and expression in Eswatini. According to the study when it came to realities of physical violence, more than half of the participants in the study had experienced some form of physical violence at some point in their lives. When I came to intimate partner violence, among lesbian participants, 29% had been sexually assaulted by an intimate partner. Among gay and other men who have sex with men, it was 26% - more than one in four. Strangers were often perpetrators of violence: one in three participants (32%) had experienced physical violence, and one in four participants (26%) sexual violence by strangers.

Half of all participants (50%) were survivors of sexual violence . Seventy-nine per cent of participants had experienced verbal harassment due to their sexual orientation and/or gender identity or expression at some point in their life, and 64% in the previous year. The statistics show that even the LGBTIQ+ community face gender based violence. it is we stop being biased when we campaign for gender based violence, let us be inclusive, fight for gender based violence no matter the sexual orientation.

The Rock of Hope would like to wish you all a Very Prideful Festive season and Happy New Year. May your 2021 be as Unique and Colourful as the Rainbow Flag.

