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# ISANGQA NEWSLETTER

The Eugenia Nothemba Gxowa Foundation

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## Welcome to *Isangqa* – The Circle

We at the Eugenia Nothemba Gxowa Foundation welcome you to the first edition of *Isangqa* – 'The Circle'. We plan to publish two issues every year in which we discuss and debate concerns relating to the rights of women and girls, particularly gender-based violence against women – the core business of the Eugenia Nothemba Gxowa Foundation (ENGF).

This edition focuses on one of the Foundation's core programmes — Collaborating with men and boys to curb gender-based violence against women and girls (GBVAW/G) — and introduces the reader to our national campaign on, 'collaborating with men in leadership positions at South Africa's tertiary institutions to curb gender-based violence against women (GBVAW) at these institutions'.

**A circle has no beginning and no end — the circle represents continuity and a sense of community.**

About the word 'isangqa'. ENGF understands 'isangqa' to be a circle where people gather formally or informally to share ideas, chat or undertake a task as a group. Congregating in a circle comes naturally to most people and is the most inclusive formation possible. Indeed, in many formal settings, such as workshops or traditional meetings, participants are encouraged to sit in a circle as a physical way of signalling that everyone in the group is an equal participant in the discussion or activity — that everyone enjoys equal participatory parity. Since there is no hierarchy in a circle, people feel included and valued, which means they feel comfortable sharing their ideas, views and experiences.

A circle has no beginning and no end — the circle represents continuity and a sense of community. Those who form the circle are invited to experience a sense of comradeship. The newsletter *Isangqa* should therefore be understood as a platform that promotes free participation and access to everyone, irrespective of gender, race, class, sexual orientation, age or geographical location.

For us at the ENGF, *Isangqa* has neither inner-circle members nor outsiders! As a member of *Isangqa*, we welcome your comments and suggestions. ♂

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# Gender-Based Violence – The Role of Men Holding Senior Leadership Positions in Universities

***Dr Stephen Burrell is the Deputy Director of the Centre for Research into Violence and Abuse at Durham University, Durham, England. He has recently co-authored a book on 'Men's Activism to End Violence Against Women' (Policy Press, 2021), and undertaken research on masculine gender norms for the UK Government Equalities Office.***

I am writing this article from the Centre for Research into Violence and Abuse (CRiVA), which was set up in 2013, and has become one of the leading hubs of research on gender-based violence (GBV) in the United Kingdom (UK). We are made up of dozens of scholars across the career span researching on how to improve societal responses to violence and abuse. One of our key areas of focus is men and masculinities, especially how to engage men and boys in preventing men's violence against women (VAW), because we want to address the roots of the problem. Our work is built on feminist approaches, based on the recognition that VAW is a major cause and consequence of gender inequality. Our research examines a range of different sectors and institutions across society, and this piece applies this knowledge to the specific context of higher education.

**Building movements to end men's violence against women**

GBV has become ever more widely discussed in the UK in the last year. The Covid-19 pandemic has shone a light on the pervasiveness of domestic abuse, with many victim-survivors trapped at home with their abusers during lockdowns.

On 3 March 2021, 33-year-old Sarah Everard – a former Durham University student – was kidnapped while walking home in London. She was then raped and murdered by a serving male police officer. This case garnered massive attention across the country, leading to a wave of grief and anger from women about the abuse that constrains their lives and freedoms on a day-to-day basis. The outrage spread to the education sector, leading to a widespread campaign, *#Everyonesinvited* highlighting the prevalence of sexual violence and harassment in schools, colleges and universities.

**The Covid-19 pandemic has shone a light on the pervasiveness of domestic abuse, with many victim-survivors trapped at home with their abusers during lockdowns.**

We have also seen arguably more attention than ever on the role of men in relation to such violence, both in terms of perpetrating it, and in relation to being part of the solution. This has led to growing interest in prevention work with men, such as that of '**White Ribbon'** and '**Beyond Equality'.** Some of this work is taking place in universities (indeed, Beyond Equality was first established at Oxford University), yet men in academia remain largely silent about violence against women. However, Sarah Everard's death does appear to have motivated more men to become agents of change in the spaces where they live their lives. Time will tell whether in the longer-term these developments lead to more men becoming allies for gender equality in settings such as universities.

Members of CRiVA have recently authored a book on men's activism to end violence against women, and we found that high-profile, horrifying cases of this kind can sometimes play an important part in instigating men to become more active. However, typically it appears to be a gradual process through which men become involved in work to stop GBV. Women in our participants' lives, such as partners, mothers and friends, often played a key role in convincing them of the need to speak out. Sometimes it was the impact of such violence on women they knew, including in some cases the murder of family members, that led these men to speak out. Other influential factors included not conforming to masculine expectations when growing up, encountering feminist ideas in education or other social movements, or learning about men's violence against women through their work, which demonstrates the impact the workplace can have.

Several of the men we spoke to, first became involved in anti-violence activism at university. This illustrates the transformative experience that higher education can be, where we engage with a range of eye-opening ideas for the first time. It is therefore vital that universities are spaces in which everyone feels equally included and able to participate freely. Currently this is too often not the case, not least due to persisting gender inequalities within academia, including harassment and abuse against female students

and staff. This remains prevalent in the UK and in universities across the globe. Indeed, universities have been described as a 'conducive context' for sexual violence. In a 2018 survey of 4,491 UK students, 62 per cent (70 per cent of women, 24 per cent of men) described experiencing some form of sexual violence at university, and 8 per cent of women reported being raped. Only 6 per cent of respondents reported their experience to the university, indicating a lack of faith in institutional processes.

**Male leaders transforming university cultures**

In many ways, universities continue to be highly hierarchical, masculinised spaces, with many subjects and leadership teams remaining male-dominated and unwelcoming to women, demonstrated by persistently high gender pay gaps. Even in subjects such as the social sciences, where most students are women, there are often more men in staff and senior positions. The unequal power dynamics and unclear boundaries of academic life make it easier for powerful men to exploit and harass female students or colleagues. Harmful masculine norms are also influential within many aspects of student life. 'Lad culture' has been widely discussed in the UK, referring to how sexism, objectification of women, 'banter' and heavy drinking are common features of male bonding on campus, particularly in settings such as sports teams and the night-time economy.

Universities have been heavily criticised for their failure to take men's violence against women seriously. Perpetrators – be they students or staff – often face few consequences for their actions, with institutions frequently appearing keener to protect their reputations (and by extension, those of the accused) and brush cases under the carpet rather than prioritising support, justice and safety for survivors. Too often universities continue to place responsibility on women to 'protect themselves' rather than on men to change their behaviour. Al Jazeera recently conducted an investigation demonstrating the continued inadequacies of university complaints procedures, highlighting several cases where male academics have been allowed to continue working unimpeded despite multiple sexual misconduct allegations being made against them.

However, campaigning by students and staff has led some institutions to start taking action, such as introducing rigorous policies and procedures, collaborating with specialist services to develop support and reporting mechanisms, and introducing prevention campaigns and programmes. This work has been influenced by global innovations, particularly in the United States (which UK universities often seek to emulate), such as 'bystander intervention' initiatives. Yet the picture is mixed at different universities and prevention efforts remain relatively superficial. A recurring issue is the de-gendering of the problem. This includes focusing only on sexual violence (particularly that perpetrated by students) rather than gender-based violence more broadly; not recognising that women are disproportionately impacted and that perpetrators are predominantly men; and failing to make the links between abuse and gender inequality in the academy. Gender-transformative, whole-institution approaches to preventing violence prevention on campus are therefore sorely needed.

**The unequal power dynamics and unclear boundaries of academic life make it easier for powerful men to exploit and harass female students or colleagues.**

Such approaches must include more men on campus actively speaking out against VAW and challenging the everyday sexism and misogyny and the restrictive masculine norms within university culture that underpin it. Everyone has a part to play in creating more equal and inclusive university communities, by reflecting on how we conduct ourselves and interact with one another. However, this is particularly important for men in positions of power and influence. Male university managers have to illustrate that this is a problem that affects everyone and which they take seriously – and model healthy and inclusive behaviours themselves. Most importantly, they must practice what they preach through concrete actions to change university structures in ways which foster gender equality, such as enabling and supporting more women to rise to senior positions.

Men ourselves have much to gain from these transformations; our own health and wellbeing at work can be detrimentally impacted by the pressure to conform to masculine expectations, such as 'working hard and playing hard' and being competitive, in control, and unemotional. This is particularly true for men perceived not to meet the standards of hegemonic masculinity, with those who are white, middle or upper class, able-bodied and heterosexual typically seen as the 'default' academic, whilst women of colour and from low-income backgrounds can be subjected to particularly intense harassment and abuse. It is thus vital to adopt an intersectional approach to violence prevention efforts on campus; for instance, by challenging how different forms of entitlement often bolster one another. Universities working to end violence against women will not only be fairer institutions, they will also be more successful and productive, by creating an environment where everyone can achieve their full potential.

**Looking to the future**

There is a need for more research on GBV in the university context, and what effective responses look like. One important area of focus for this should be the perpetrators, who often remain hidden from the conversation. Who are they, what are their motivations and enablers, and how can their behaviour be meaningfully addressed and changed? Equally necessary is more research into prevention; how can we bring about transformations in attitudes and cultures in order to ensure that violence and abuse on campus are genuinely no longer tolerated? Particularly important is understanding effective approaches

to engaging men at university – and especially senior men, about whom there is little research currently. How can they create change in themselves, their peers and their institutions? This could include speaking to those leaders who do recognise the importance of gender-based violence about what led them to take this stance, and to those not yet speaking out, to understand the barriers to their doing so.

More knowledge about the situation in different countries is vitally needed; there is much to be learnt from efforts to prevent gender-based violence across the world. CRiVA is a member of the MenEngage Alliance, which provides valuable opportunities to learn from organisations, activists and researchers working towards similar goals globally. We in the Global North must cease acting as if we have all of the answers when we have so much to learn from what are often the most innovative and interesting initiatives in the Global South.

We already possess plentiful knowledge about both the problem and the solutions, so the fact that more research is always needed cannot be an excuse for inaction. The time for change at universities is now. This has been underscored by Covid-19, which has shone a light on and intensified existing gendered and other inequalities. In its upheaval of social norms, the pandemic offers a crucial opportunity. It has forced many organisations to take more seriously the health, wellbeing and home lives of their staff. It has also instigated shifts in masculine norms among some men, who have been forced to reflect on our vulnerabilities and interdependence and become more involved in caregiving and community support. It is vital that men embrace questions about rigid constructions of masculinity and support women's calls for equality and non-violence – and it's down to men in positions of power to take the lead. ⚥

# Working with Men and Boys to Curb Gender-Based Violence against Women

***Dr Lindsay Kelland is a feminist philosopher and senior lecturer in the Allan Gray Centre for Leadership Ethics at Rhodes University. She is the Secretary of the ENGF Board.***

**'Sexual harassment and violence are endemic in academic spaces with hardly any efforts to address the vice in any serious way.' *Sylvia Tamale***

One of the cornerstone programmes of the Eugenia Nothemba Gxowa Foundation (hereafter 'the ENGF') focuses on collaborating with men and boys to curb gender-based violence against women and girls in South Africa. Underpinning the programme are the principles and ethos of the UN Women's 'HeForShe' Global Solidarity Campaign[1] and the guidelines for changing gender norms provided by the University of Durham's Centre for Research into Violence and Abuse.[2] Grounded in the idea that gender equality is an issue that affects us all – socially, economically and politically – 'HeForShe' seeks to actively involve men and boys as agents of change for the achievement of gender equality and women's rights.

The ENGF's 'Collaborating with Men and Boys to Curb GBVAW Programme' will be rolled out as a campaign targeting institutions of higher learning in South Africa. Borrowing from 'HeForShe', it will be led by champions – Chancellors, Vice-Chancellors and other male leaders – at these institutions. Within these institutions the objective is to motivate and support these champions to visibly and actively advocate against GBVAW. We believe that these champions could serve, to use the language of the youth, as 'influencers' who represent alternative modes of being masculine in the world, inspiring other men and boys to follow suit; for example, to consider the fact that being 'a man' might not mean what they have been socialised to believe it means. Put differently, our envisioned champions will introduce a changed mindset – a transformed manner of being, perceiving, and treating others. In this regard, the programme is based on the seven principles of the 'HeForShe' campaign, which encourage men and boys to:

1 Visit https://www.heforshe.org/en to discover more about the 'HeForShe' campaign.

2 Visit https://www.durham.ac.uk/research/institutes-and-centres/research-violence-abuse/ for more information on their work.

1. Believe that discrimination against women and girls is wrong; that violence against them is unacceptable; and that they should have equal access to opportunities;
2. Understand that standing up for gender equality is standing up for humanity;
3. Encourage women and girls to seek out opportunities;
4. Speak up when they notice discrimination, whether interpersonal or institutional;
5. Lead by setting an example in their families and communities by enacting equality in everyday actions;
6. Challenge men and boys if they see them acting or speaking in ways that are discriminatory or oppressive to women and girls; and
7. Support others as they work for a world in which discrimination and violence are absent.

**Why the focus on tertiary education institutions?**

Over the past two decades, both feminist research and student activism on university campuses have highlighted that our 'ivory towers' are not immune to the evils pervasive in the rest of our society – including the 'second pandemic' of GBVAW/G. Far from being safe spaces, our campuses are microcosms of the 'Female Fear Factory' that South African feminist scholar, Pumla Dineo Gqola, describes so well in her latest book.[3] Ugandan feminist academic and activist, Sylvia Tamale, echoes this sentiment, claiming that "most universities are microcosms of the wider African societies that maintain strong forces of sexism, racism, homophobia, transphobia and violence against women."[4] We are no more safe inside the 'hallowed halls' of the academy than we are on the streets or, indeed, in our homes.[5] The South African Police Service's crime statistics indicate that 380 cases of rape were reported from tertiary institutions in 2019/2020. However, it is common knowledge that a large proportion of rapes and attempted rapes go unreported and, furthermore, that most incidents of sexual harassment are not reported. It follows that the actual extent of sexual violence in our tertiary institutions remains unknown.

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However, given the nature and purpose of these institutions, they could (and should) serve as transformative spaces – as sites for transformation of staff, students, and society. That tertiary institutions *could* serve as these spaces is captured in the words of Emma Watson – UN Women Global Goodwill Ambassador and a founder of 'HeForShe' – who claims that 'a good university is like a tiny utopia – it's a miniature model of how the whole of society could look.'[6] That they *should* serve as these spaces is mandated by our Department of Education.[7] Moreover, failure to address the problem of gender-based violence in tertiary institutions impacts negatively on the emphasis placed by, for example, the UN's 60th Commission on the Status of Women and the Sustainable Development Goals on girls' access to quality education and retention in school.

The ENGF's Programme therefore aims to address this aspect of the problem by encouraging work towards transforming the perspectives and behaviour of men and boys, as well as promoting more openness, vigilance, reporting and prosecution, and data collection at our tertiary institutions. The programme serves to further the mission and vision of the ENGF, namely a safe and secure South Africa where young women and girls can realise their full potential and enjoy their rights as enshrined in our Constitution.

The objectives of the programme are as follows: to make the role that men and boys can play in combatting gender-based violence, sexual violence, rape and homophobia more visible; to encourage men and boys to stand up against gender-based violence wherever, whenever, and however it occurs; and to advocate for women's rights, women's empowerment and the systemic, structural change required to promote gender equality. ⚥

3 Pumla Dineo Gqola *Female Fear Factory* (Melinda Ferguson Books: 2021).

4 Sylvia Tamale *Decolonisation and Afro-Feminism* p. 258 (Daraja Press: 2020).

5 Feminist scholars and activists have long worked to undermine the 'stranger-danger' myth surrounding sexual and gender-based violence, showing how intimate partners, family members, and those who are 'trusted' more often than not perpetrate gender-based violence.

6 'HeForShe IMPACT 10x10x10: University Parity Report 2016' p.7.

7 See, for instance, their 1996 'Green paper on Higher Education Transformation', and 1997 'White Paper 3: A Programme for the Transformation of Higher Education.'

# The 2016 #RUReferencelist Protest: A Look from the Inside

***Nhlakanipho Mahlangu is co-founder of a web series entitled Remember My Voice – A Queer Memory Box [Remember My Voice trailer]. She was a participant in the #RUReferencelist protest and Rhodes University SRC President of 2018.***

This article seeks to shed light on the lived experience of the #RUReferenceList protest, which started on 17 April 2016 and went on until 21 April 2016. Several accounts capture how important this moment has been in unearthing the prevailing scourge of gender-based violence in institutions of higher learning. Gouws details the strides protest methodologies made in widening the decolonial "discourse of African sexuality" (2018). Dlakavu (2016) cites #RUReferencelist as a moment of activism where women found their voices to revolt against violent tertiary education spaces. However, there are few accounts of the events that led up to the protest actions taken and of the actual experiences of students at the time.

The Rhodes Must Fall and Fees Must Fall protests took place in 2015. Rhodes Must |Fall sought to challenge the colonial nature of the university while Fees Must Fall sought to bring an end to the commodification of education. Both protests called for individuals to be understood in terms of the many forms of oppression that each individual was subjected to. Black, queer, non-gender and binary students were at the forefront of protest action (Khan, 2017). The collective culture of members of this grouping formed the backbone of the #RUReferencelist protest action and the protest methodology used therein.

In the build up to the 2015 Rhodes Must Fall and Fees Must Fall protests, students decided that black and queer women should lead. The black woman, and especially the black queer woman, became the symbol of representative intersectional leadership. This was because it was assumed that members of this group and sub-group are likely to be well-positioned to understand a wide spectrum of the forms that gender related oppression takes (Ndelu, Dlakavu & Boswell, 2017).

The incident at the University of Cape Town's Azania House, where a woman was raped by a man she considered to be a comrade, became a catalyst for action to correct patriarchal and misogynistic behaviours in South African universities (Dlakavu, 2016). The catalyst for the actions taken by the #RUReferencelist group was the university's failure to respond empathetically and effectively to student reports that students had made (since the 2015 protests) about violence against women within the university context.

**Build up**

Weeks before the Reference List protest, which started on 17 April 2016, a student organisation called Chapter 2.12, which was a collective made up of concerned students, started a campaign to question the university community's responses to reports of gender-based violence by survivors. As part of the campaign, posters detailing examples of non-empathetic responses by university staff, including management, were posted outside the Rhodes library. The wording on the posters presented verbatim quotes from university stakeholders, such as managers, protocols and academic staff. The posters were removed by the Campus Protection Unit.

Following the removal, a list of names, followed by 'et.al', was posted on Facebook anonymously. The post was titled 'The reference list' and consisted of the names of men at Rhodes accused of rape or sexual violence of any kind. A group of students who were following the post online mobilised and gathered outside the residences of some of the listed men. Thus began a week of rolling protest action at Rhodes, which became known as the #RUReferencelist protest.

**Destroying the purple bubble**

The small size of Rhodes University meant that many of the named students were known by the student body. Many were respected student leaders who had held coveted positions within student governance. Most of them were thought of as attractive men from good, well-off families. The #RUReferencelist therefore disrupted conventional conceptions of what a rapist ought to look like and behave like, challenging our implicit biases. Rapists ceased to be distant, cruel characters from elsewhere. They were our classmates, tutors and lecturers. This was significantly easier for women students to grasp than men students.

During this protest period, it was not unusual for women leaders to have confrontations with men who continued to insist that their friends were innocent. Many men students were seen as 'rape apologists'. The #RUReferencelist called for the standard response to any reports of sexual violence to be "#Webelieveyou".

In recognition of the difficulty survivors face trying to access justice our activism needed to show that we believed them.

**Collective trauma and disillusionment**

The protest became a space where we aired our collective trauma and despondency with the systems of the university. With the extent of sexual violence experienced by students, it became a forum where many could congregate. It allowed people to define particular incidents that had made them feel uncomfortable as either rape or sexual assault.

Many students had come to university to be safe from abusers in their homes and communities. The #RUReferencelist protest was demonstrating that this sense of safety was based on false assumptions about the university. It was not uncommon, during the week of protest, to walk around campus or to a shop and suddenly hear screaming from a student who had seen their assailant. Designated spaces around the campus were created as breakaway rooms for students to find reprieve. However, despite the efforts of the leadership the #RUReferencelist began to take on toxic traits.

Women were sometimes forced to 'out' themselves as rape survivors and detail their encounters with GBV in order to gain respect. Initially, the protest had galvanised the student body by putting forward the understanding that each individual and each sub-group experiences their own specific combination of oppressive forms. What emerged, however, was a tendency to silence views that didn't cohere with the predominant line of thinking. Students would be castigated for referring to men on the Reference List as 'alleged' perpetrators or making any positive comments about their characters.

A student who did not agree with a particular line of thinking could be silenced easily by being reminded that they were not queer, a woman, poor or differently abled. The true value of an intersectional movement that takes into account multiple and overlapping forms of oppression, was therefore not fully yielded.

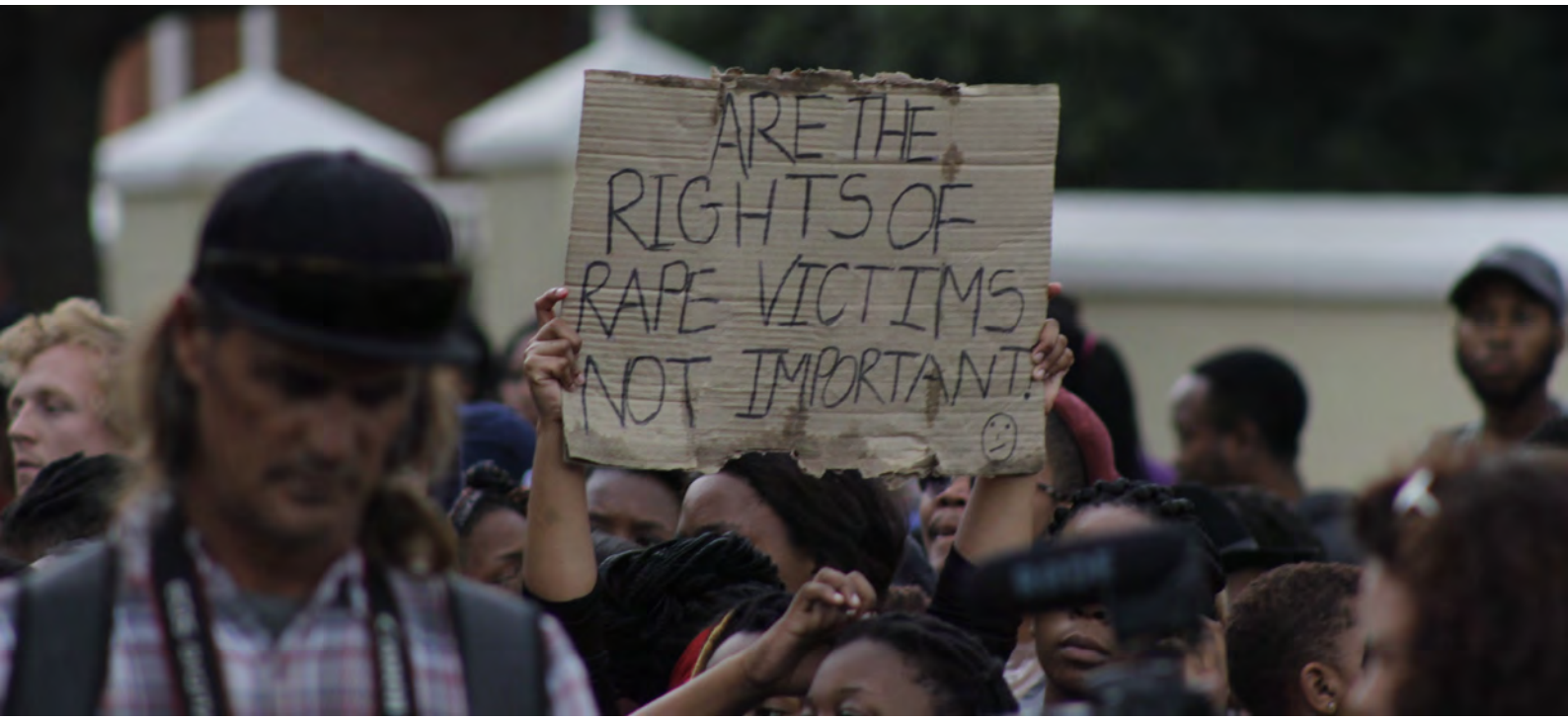
**Sexual aggression must be de-normalized**

Despite the fact that the movement became destructive in some of its behaviour, its core demands made sense to me. These were: the expulsion or suspension of the named students, and an overhaul of the university's sexual offences policy. Underlying both demands was, I believe, a plea from multiple individuals to live in a world where safety feels attainable.
A key source of frustration was the knowledge that in reality, no matter how many policies an institution has in place, students would continue experience gender-based violence. This points to, among other things, the need for the robust sexual re-socialisation of men as expressed in broad statements such as 'men need to call each other out'.

With studies on rape myth acceptance showing that male sexual aggression has become normalised, it is clear that campaigns are needed to help men build a sexual self-concept that values consent (Orth, Van Wyk & Andipatin, 2020).

Attitudes that have made intergenerational and intersectional conversations about sex taboo are our first stumbling block. Rather than readily initiating programmes, men leaders within the university space often stand aside as spectators. There is a need for universities to show an understanding of their role in the sexual socialisation of students. Dismantling power relationships at an institutional level is also very important.

As participants in the life of these institutions, we must devote ourselves to creating programmes and interventions that will ensure that GBV in all its forms will someday be considered deviant and unacceptable. ⚥



# Sonke Gender Justice – A Call-up for Men

*Mphokuhle Mabhena is the Child Rights and Positive Parenting Regional Coordinator at Sonke Gender Justice based in the Johannesburg office in South Africa.*

Engaging men through a feminist lens that brings the lived experiences of women and children to the foreground, facilitates a whole-society approach to end the scourge of sexual gender-based violence (SGBV), where men must shift their gender norms and patriarchal beliefs. At Sonke Gender Justice, we work across Africa to strengthen government, civil society and citizen capacity to promote gender equality, prevent domestic and sexual violence, and reduce the spread and impact of HIV and AIDS. We are also the secretariat of the MenEngage Africa Alliance.

Over the years, we have been involved in many SGBV awareness campaigns, such as 'One Man Can', which encourages men to become actively involved in advocating for gender equality, preventing gender-based violence, and responding to HIV and AIDS, and 'Brothers for Life', which mobilises men and boys to act as allies in the struggle for gender equality and the elimination of violence in communities. From our experience through interacting with men and boys, we have realised that the lack of positive male role models in our communities is one of the main reasons that violence by men and boys is often normalised.

To us, positive male role models are men who embody gender equality and have more equitable and gender-just views of women and children. These role models would be allies to the feminist movement and to the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersex (LGBTQI+) community. As such, it is very important for men and boys to be able to identify harmful norms, beliefs and stereotypes that perpetuate violence in and around tertiary institutions and to act as allies in ending sexual gender-based violence.

As a young woman, my work on male engagement has presented me with a valuable opportunity to challenge men and boys by having difficult conversations around harmful masculinities. For instance, having led campaigns such as 'MenCare', a global fatherhood campaign, I have promoted the universal uptake of equitable, non-violent parenting practices and facilitated men's equal involvement in caregiving. I have done so with the hope that men and boys can become more compassionate and loving towards women and children, so that they can embody and have more equitable and gender-just views of women and children and be allies to the feminist movement and the LGBTIQ+ community.

**As a young woman, my work on male engagement has presented me with a valuable opportunity to challenge men and boys by having difficult conversations around harmful masculinities.**

**The part that can be played by positive male role models**

Jesuit priest and Director of the Jesuit Institute, Father Russell Pollitt SJ, openly speaks of SGBV, not only in the community, but also at the University of Witwatersrand. I recall on one ordinary Sunday morning in 2013 when delivering the homily, Fr Russell described how hurt he often felt in his day-to-day dialogues with students when he heard their accounts of rape and abuse at the university. That Sunday, at the Holy Trinity Catholic Church, which is housed within the University of Witwatersrand, in Braamfontein, Johannesburg, the church decided to adopt the 'Kwanele Kwanele' (Enough is Enough) campaign. The campaign had been launched by McCauley House, a Catholic school in Johannesburg, with the aim of providing access to information for victims and survivors of SGBV. This bold move by a conservative institution marked a significant change: it indicated that churches and faith leaders had begun to adopt policies to ensure that SGBV is addressed within the faith spaces and community at large.

At Sonke, we are involved in supporting faith communities and leaders to take more action against violence. This includes working with Archbishop Thabo Makgoba, the Anglican Archbishop of Cape Town, who leads the 'We Will Speak Out' South Africa coalition. The coalition mobilises and equips leaders to end SGBV across the country. 'We Will Speak Out' campaigns have also been successfully launched in Burundi, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Rwanda.

With such commitment from faith leaders, I believe that the male leadership of every tertiary institution in South Africa should ensure that they strive to end SGBV by joining this work as allies, mobilising men and boys in

higher learning spaces to speak out and lend solidarity and deep listening in alliance with women's rights and feminist voices.

It is also my hope that when we reflect on 16 Days of Activism in 2022, there will be a stronger implementation of the policy framework against gender-based violence in tertiary institutions, so that it includes the mobilisation of men and boys to eliminate SGBV.

I would like to encourage deep listening by men in alliance with the feminist movement. I would like to see more action calling for the elimination of violence against women in which men stand up to other men by critiquing their patriarchal ways. This would include the design of education and prevention programmes to encourage a culture of dialogue and to transform the perspective of men and boys, while encouraging young women and girls to report SGBV cases within universities. ⚥

# Gender-Based Violence in Higher Education: An Integrated, Coordinated, Collaborative Approach Needed

***Professor Francis Petersen is the Rector and Vice-Chancellor of the University of the Free State.***

There is no doubt that gender-based violence against women and girls is a profound and widespread problem. In the pre-COVID-19 era, we witnessed a massive increase in this disturbing phenomenon on our higher education campuses.

And at the root of it: Unequal power relations between men and women that still prevail in our societies.

The question, of course, is: What can we do to fix it?

I believe it starts by prioritising the issue – in the same way that any pandemic should be swiftly prioritised by leaders. Once we recognise the importance and urgency of this pandemic, we need to disrupt its spread by implementing urgent interventions. But it should not stop there. Interventions need to be integrated and coordinated within a wider context of collaboration. It should also be continuously and critically assessed to make sure that it is really effective.

**Creating safe spaces**

Collective thought and input from various perspectives are needed to create safe spaces on our campuses. Like many other higher education institutions in the country, we have various measures at the University of the Free State (UFS) to ensure students' safety. These include security cameras, proper lighting on pedestrian routes, patrols by marked and unmarked vehicles, as well as various safety awareness campaigns to communicate safety tips. All of these contribute to creating a safe space in a *physical* sense.

But a university should also be a safe *intellectual* space, where opinions on attitudes towards women can be freely expressed, tested, and challenged. We need to use our discourse platforms to speak out against injustice and abuse.

**An integrated approach**

Our intervention strategies should not be haphazard and isolated but should form one integrated response that permeates the whole institution. Measures around prevention should dovetail with those around accountability, as well as those around monitoring and support, forming a complete 'ecosystem' of intervention.

We followed this approach at the UFS when we launched the Sexual Assault Response Team (SART) a few years ago. SART is made up of business units across the university's three campuses and works according to a set process flow to provide victims of gender-based violence with legal, medical, and counselling services. Victims of abuse have one place where they can report assault. From there, everything – from applying for restriction orders to making academic and accommodation arrangements, if need be – is taken care of in an integrated fashion.

Furthermore, we have established an Office for Gender Equality and Anti-Discrimination in the Unit for Institutional Change and Social Justice that handles incidents of unfair discrimination and gender-based violence, as well as conducting advocacy and training in these areas.

**Collaboration between institutions**

The need for different entities facing the same challenge to work together and learn from one another's mistakes and successes was again highlighted by the COVID-19 pandemic. When it comes to the scourge of GBV on our campuses, it is vital that different universities and institutions of higher learning work together in a coordinated fashion, characterised by regular and effective communication and the sharing of ideas across different platforms.

**Focus on prevention**

We need to shift our focus from reaction to prevention. I believe we have a very definite mandate as institutions of higher learning to not only produce good *students*, but good *citizens*. And for any good citizen, abuse is simply not an option. Our university spaces should be microcosms of what an ideal society should look like – founded on the principles of equality, tolerance, excellence, diversity, community upliftment, and forward-thinking – striving for social justice in everything that it does. We need to play a transformative role in the lives of our students, helping to create citizens who will ultimately create a better society.

Education is about so much more than just transferring facts, figures, and concepts. It is about bringing a deep understanding of the true definition of respect, equality, and tolerance to our students. In the end, mutual respect is the only antidote for twisted views on masculinity and paternalism that still prevail in many of our communities.

**Role of male leaders – creating an enabling environment**

The fact that so many antiabuse initiatives are driven by women, is an indictment to us as men. In higher education, large parts of management structures are made up of males. It is vital that we, as men in leadership positions, do not turn a blind eye to abuse but show active leadership-in-action through our behaviour, relentlessly driving policy to effect change and implementing the structural changes that flow from it. Once structures are in place, we need to go on to create an enabling environment, making sure that awareness and implementation filter through the entire institution.

**It is vital that we, as men in leadership positions, do not turn a blind eye to abuse but show active leadership-in-action...**

We need to change archaic and outdated ways of thinking. Every individual on our campuses needs to experience a sense of belonging and be treated with equity and dignity. We are certainly not home yet. But integration, coordination, and collaboration will help us get there. ⚥

# Collaborating with Senior Men in Institutions of Higher Learning: A Chancellor's Perspective

***Dr Judy Dlamini is Chancellor of the University of the Witwatersrand. She is a medical doctor who chairs the boards of the Wits Donald Gordon Medical Centre, and the South African Gender-based Violence Response Fund.***

Gender-based violence against women and girls (GBVAW/G) is a global challenge, especially in higher education institutions. 'More than one in four undergraduate women in the United States experienced non-consensual sexual contact by physical force or inability to consent while at university' revealed a 2019 Association of American Universities' Campus Climate Survey, the largest study of its kind with a sample size of over 180,000 students.[1] South Africa has one of the highest rates of gender-based violence and femicide (GBVF), with a femicide rate that is five times the global average according to the World Health Organisation. Between 2019 and 2020, there was an average increase of 146 sexual offences and 116 specifically

1 McInerney, W. 2021. Universities engaging men to end violence against women. Accessed from https://www.universityworldnews.com/post.php?story=20210302134035556

rape cases per day, compared to the same period between 2018 and 2019. The lockdown measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19 were part of the reason for the marked increase. The institutions of higher education exist within this context.

The forms of gender-based violence experienced at a particular university are influenced by the context within that institution. It can take the form of sexual harassment, scientific sabotage, physical and verbal threats, denigration, exclusion and problematising special needs.[2] While all categories of students and staff are affected, some groups tend to be more vulnerable than others, hence the need for an intersectional lens when investigating and addressing GBV. The perpetrators of violence are usually men, whether it's student to student, staff to student or between staff members. The dynamics within and across different disciplines or faculties are also influenced by the stereotypes within those departments. For instance, the culture within male-dominated disciplines can be hostile to female students and staff members who dare to break the stereotype and enter those departments. Understanding the forms of violence experienced by women is important, whether it is 'partner violence', 'stranger violence', 'acquaintance violence', 'colleague violence' or 'bystander violence'.[3]

Gender-based violence is under-reported, underestimated and under-researched at universities.[4] Each university's attitude and response to allegations of GBV informs the support provided to the survivor and the means of recourse for the perpetrator. This in turn influences the survivor's likelihood to report GBV. There are many factors that lead to under-reporting, from fear of not being believed, to being discouraged from making a complaint, to fear of retaliation by the perpetrator, to victims/survivors not realising that what they experienced was violence.[5]

In a structure which promotes hierarchies, it matters who the perpetrator is. Is it an A-rated professor who brings lots of funding to the university or is it an administration officer? The most important determinant in how an institution addresses GBV is the attitude of the institution's leaders. Do they understand GBV? What is their attitude to GBV and gender equity? What culture and behaviour are acceptable to the leaders and the institution? These questions influence the policies and the intervention led from the top to address gender equity and GBV.

**The need for an intersectional lens**

An intersectional lens in identifying intervention levels and types of violence is crucial, as is cultural diversity. While there is no single driver of GBV, an ecological framework that entrenches men's superiority over women and excludes women from leadership positions lays the foundation for gender inequality, gender harm and violence. Men lead in all sectors of our society and have the power to influence the culture of the institutions they lead and the power to change behaviours and attitudes through driving the appropriate policies for gender equity and rewarding behaviours that promote gender equity. It is this understanding that led the former executive director for UN Women, Dr Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, to launch the 'HeForShe' initiative, which seeks to have men as allies in achieving gender equality.

Wits University was one of the first academic institutions to sign up as a 'HeForShe' member. 'In my opinion, one of the obstacles we are yet to overcome is that of representation. If we would see more females leading, I believe more of us would feel comfortable in taking on leadership positions,' said Babalwa Bakebu, former Postgraduate Association President at Wits University. As a country we have many social identities

**Gender-based violence and femicide is prevalent across all cultures and social classes globally. Men, more often than not, are the perpetrators; therefore, no sustainable solution is possible without their active involvement and participation, and taking a lead.**

2 Naezer et al. 2019 in Strid, S. 2021. On the importance of addressing gender-based violence in universities and research organisations. Accessed from https://unisafe-gbv.eu/blog/on-the-importance-of-addressing-gender-based-violence-in-universities-and-research-organisations/

3 Chandra & Erlingsdottir, 2021.

4 Naezer et.al. 2019.

5 ibid

of disadvantage, the main two being race and gender. Our universities are no different. Representation of the country's demographic in leadership positions, makes leadership accessible to all members of society.

Solving the problem only for those who subscribe to one particular social identity of disadvantage discriminates against those who have multiple social identities of disadvantage. This observation, based on national research on racial and gender representation at leadership level at our universities, was behind the formation of the Female Academic Leaders Fellowship, a non-profit company that seeks to develop a pipeline of black women academic leaders.

**Men's role in eradicating GBV at tertiary Institutions**

Gender-based violence and femicide is prevalent across all cultures and social classes globally. Men, more often than not, are the perpetrators; therefore, no sustainable solution is possible without their active involvement and participation, and taking a lead. Some tertiary institutions have started Men's Violence Prevention Programmes (MVPs) to engage with men as allies. These programmes are based on the belief that men can and should play a positive, proactive and strategic role, working with women, in the vital efforts to end GBV.[6]

Over the past two decades there has been a growing body of research which shows that well-designed MVP programmes are effective in changing men's sexist behaviour and attitudes, however, more research needs to be conducted to identify programmes that work against those that do not.[7] According to McInerney (2021), programmes like the 'Men's Story Project' provide a clear and research-informed approach to how storytelling and the expressive arts can be integrated into traditional public health and feminist MVP programmes in higher education and community contexts. Such programmes can incorporate social change campaigns to raise awareness, teach intervention skills for bystanders, and promote healthy, equitable intergender relationships. Two years ago in 2019, the South African Department of Higher Education and Training launched a Policy Framework to Address Gender-based Violence in the Post-School Education and Training System which requires all higher education institutions to have GBV policies in place by the end of 2022.[8] This was followed in 2021 by the release of a set of instruments that seek to turn the framework into action. However, any initiative and any policy, in order to be effective, requires committed leadership and adequate resourcing. Leaders within tertiary institutions need to protect and prioritise survivors and hold perpetrators accountable, regardless of their rank, through transformative, creative and inclusive leadership.

What is required for sustainable transformation is a multipronged, multilevel approach using an intersectional lens by transformational, creative and inclusive leaders. Eradication of GBV from society, especially institutions of learning, will ensure access to quality education for girl children and women, making the UN's Sustainable Development Goals 4 and 5 achievable. A lasting solution requires intergenerational and intergender collaboration amongst leaders, amplifying the work of feminist organisations.

As President Nelson Mandela said in 1994: 'Freedom cannot be achieved unless women have been emancipated from all forms of oppression… Our endeavours must be about the liberation of the woman, the emancipation of the man and the liberty of the child.' ⚥

6 McInerney, W. 2021. Universities engaging men to end violence against women. Accessed from https://www.universityworldnews.com/post.php?story=20210302134035556

7 ibid

8 Makoni, 2020

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