



CONSTITUTION HILL



**For immediate release:**

**20 November 2014**

**Social Dialogue on Transgender Learners in the South African Education System and Transgender Day of Remembrance (TDOR) Event.**

**09h00-13h00 Social Dialogue and 14h00-16h00 Transgender Awareness and Commemoration at Constitution Hill, Women's Jail, Johannesburg.**

On the 20<sup>th</sup> of November 2014, Transgender and Intersex Africa (TIA) and Iranti-org will be hosting a Social Dialogue on the challenges and lived realities of trans\* and gender non-conforming learners in the South African education system. The dialogue will serve to raise awareness about issues of gender identity and its intersectionality with education, access to economic empowerment and transphobia.

The purpose of the national social dialogue is to promote engagement between representatives from government, civil society organisations, parents and trans\* learners on the issues of sexual orientation and gender identity and how to embrace diversity within schools. The dialogue seeks to promote visibility and transparency of the issues at hand and develop programmes and policies that are more inclusive to all learners

In 2014, more cases of human and civil rights violations against transgender learners were reported to TIA and Iranti-org, it is clear that transgender learners continue to face discrimination within the educational system and that these learners are not afforded the same amount of protection against bullying, harassment and discrimination in comparison to cisgender learners. The transgender community in South Africa remains one of the most economically disempowered populations in the country. Economic disempowerment can be linked to the significant school dropout rates among transgender persons; bullying, harassment and lack of understanding from teachers being the top reasons for dropping out.

The Social Dialogue will be held at Constitutional Hill in Johannesburg from 9:00 am until 1:00 pm. After the dialogue, the two organisations will host a Transgender Day of Remembrance commemoration event from 13:00 pm till 17:00 pm at the same venue. "A dialogue between the Department of Education and ourselves is

long overdue. Our government has an opportunity to eradicate poverty and to improve our lives by ensuring that transgender and gender non conforming learners are not pushed out of the system. Gender affirming schools will mirror the constitutional mandate to protect all children," Jabu Pereira, Director of Iranti-org

### **Transgender Day of Remembrance (TDOR)**

The 20<sup>th</sup> of November 2014 is the 16<sup>th</sup> international Transgender Day of Remembrance, a day that is commemorated annually in more than 20 countries. The day is aimed at creating greater visibility and raising public awareness of hate crimes against transgender people. TDOR fosters a space for mourning and remembering lives lost as a result of hate, transphobia and various other acts of violence.

Transgender Europe's Trans Monitoring Project report for 2014 revealed that 226 transgender people were murdered worldwide in the past 12 months. The findings of the report are disturbing as it reveals that most of the killings took place in countries that have the most progressive civil rights. There continues to be lack of data from many African countries, 9 killings of transgender people have been reported in 4 African countries, submission of data is closely linked to countries with strong trans\* movements and professional monitoring.

South Africa voted in favour of the SOGI resolution that was adopted by the UN in September 2014 and the Department of Justice and Constitutional Development launched an LGBTI programme that aims to address hate crimes against the LGBTI community that have shocked the country in recent years. It is therefore imperative that civil society, government and the private sector invest in more effective and efficient ways of monitoring violence against transgender people and in findings ways to prevent the continued discrimination, harassment and attacks on transgender bodies.

*"We cannot honestly say that violence against transgender people is decreasing in South Africa, what we know is that cases are not being reported and that transgender people are often labelled as gay or lesbian which makes it even more difficult to collect trans\* specific data that is connected to violence. Civil Society and government need to find ways to ensure that cases are reported and that justice is upheld in those instances. TIA and Iranti-org will be in solidarity with countless other trans\* organisations and groups around the world to commemorate TDOR and raise awareness about violence on transgender bodies, we will also speak out against institutional violence that trans\* people continue to face in South Africa"- says Nthabiseng Mokoena, Programs and Staff Management Director, TIA*

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**About TIA**

TIA was founded in 2010 and focuses on transgender and intersex issues in previously disadvantaged communities in South Africa. TIA seeks to break the silence and stop the ignorance surrounding the existence of the black transgender and intersex people in African communities and bring knowledge of applicable terminologies and a better understanding of transgender and intersexuality. [www.transgenderintersexafrica.org.za](http://www.transgenderintersexafrica.org.za)

**About IRANTI-ORG**

Iranti-Org is an African visual media organisation established in 2012. It works within a human rights framework to raise issues of sexual orientation and gender identities. To date, Iranti-org has documented hate crimes and human rights violations in the Northern Cape, Limpopo and Gauteng provinces. Iranti-org has also set up the African Queer Media Makers Network, which seeks to build the media making capacity of LGBTI activists in southern Africa. [www.iranti-org.co.za](http://www.iranti-org.co.za)