



## An intersectional approach to collective societal responsibility



*by Busisiwe Nxumalo, March 2022*

A Tale of Two Cities, and two realities of the Queer community in Cape Town. The city remains divided based on race and class (Crankshaw, 2012). Even in attempts of inclusivity such as the Annual Cape Town Pride, one will find the intersectionalities of oppression co-existing with acts of symbolic inclusivity. Cape Town Pride takes place in the city bowl and extends to the Greenpoint area, which is the centre of leafy suburban areas, where the majority of the black working class in the city have limited access. This speaks to the issues of division of race and class (Crankshaw, 2012). There have been activists who have raised this before and it is not a new issue. The main concern is that over the years, nothing has changed. There is no willingness to attempt to transform Cape Town Pride despite the valuable critiques over the years from the black queer community. Failing to transform in an ever-changing and dynamic society creates more problems than solutions. When implementing inclusive spaces one must be mindful of the different intersectionalities that exist and be intentional about one's actions. Supporting all spaces that attempt to create inclusivity must be supported. SALO attended Cape Town Pride as part of our ongoing programme of advocacy and solidarity amongst marginalised people, particularly, the LGBTQIA+ community.

Part of raising the issues has been calling on public figures, people of influence and politicians to also pledge their solidarity publicly to the LGBTIAQ+ community. This becomes an important part of allyship as representation is an integral part of transformation. While allyship is important, one must be cognizant of the privileges an individual possesses and be intentional about solidarity. A concern that has been raised from the LGBTIAQ+ community to allies is that they only pledge solidarity when it is convenient for them and fits the narrative of the privileges they enjoy. An example is how allyship will be shown at the annual Cape Town Pride but will not be extended to on the ground where rampant hate crimes are being committed. Their solidarity must be questioned as it is only shown in suburban areas and not in communities where these crimes happen. Multiple truths can exist at the same time. Solidarity should be meaningful and not only done as a PR stunt.

There has been a rampant rise in hate crimes in the country and the Western Cape remains the capital where these inhumane crimes are committed (CrimeStatsSA). These crimes are not being committed in the suburban areas where the inclusive events are taking place. At the same time, solidarity shown as inclusivity in the city bowl is not extended to communities. It speaks to how Cape Town is the tale of two cities, where the same group of marginalised people experience different lived realities. Some experience privilege and others continued marginalisation. The implementation of the Prevention of Hate Crimes and Hate Speech bill becomes of paramount importance. This will be one of the mechanisms to hold those who commit such crimes accountable.

Sex Workers Education and Advocacy Taskforce and Sonke Gender Justice have been two prominent organisations that are at the forefront of supporting sex workers' rights and are calling for the decriminalisation of sex work. There are also a number of activists in the country who support sex workers' rights (Mgabo, et al). Sex workers remain a marginalised group in society. The decriminalisation of sex work will protect sex workers from violence and discrimination. The Department of Justice has begun the process of consultations on whether South Africa should decriminalise sex work.

The rise of GBV in the country was declared a second pandemic due to the high rate. It has taken four years for the new anti-GBV legislation to be introduced since the launch of the National Presidential Summit on Gender Based Violence and Femicide. This new legislation will offer more protection measures for victims and survivors. The National Shutdown protests across the country were a catalyst to the urgency of a broader national conversation on GBV. There are many activists, individuals and organisations that played an important role in making this a reality. This proves how the collective responsibility of society amplifies the call for addressing issues and that change can be a reality. While new legislation is being introduced and more dialogues are happening, there should be an investigation of the human rights violations that have been committed by the police on marginalised groups, as this is another contributing factor to the ongoing GBV pandemic we are experiencing as a country.

South Africa prides itself on having one of the most progressive constitutions in the world, which remains a fact but the lived realities of many marginalised groups in the country contradict the legislation. Many activists and organisations have decided to work together through strategic partnerships to do more advocacy work and make changes to pieces of legislation where there are gaps. The introduction of new legislation pieces must be accompanied by structural changes in various parts of society such as the workplace of government and the private sector, places of religion, educational institutions and public social spaces.

Being a person who does not commit violence is not enough. We need to speak out more and support the efforts which empower and address gender inequality and end discrimination. The multiple layers of oppression that people face are interconnected. Change in our society needs to happen with urgency, as the changes in the legislation alone will not resolve the current problems we are facing. There is no one body that is solely responsible for societal change and we are all collectively responsible to build a better society. Human rights must be recognised for all people. We must begin to address societal issues with an intersectional approach as it would steer us in a direction that would begin to adequately address all injustice and forms of oppression.

#### **Sources and further readings :**

- [https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Owen-Crankshaw/publication/265966511\\_Does\\_De-Industrialisation\\_Cause\\_Social\\_Polarisation\\_in\\_Global\\_Cities/links/560d19f408ae9755d9733707/Does-De-Industrialisation-Cause-Social-Polarisation-in-Global-Cities.pdf](https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Owen-Crankshaw/publication/265966511_Does_De-Industrialisation_Cause_Social_Polarisation_in_Global_Cities/links/560d19f408ae9755d9733707/Does-De-Industrialisation-Cause-Social-Polarisation-in-Global-Cities.pdf)
- <https://www.iol.co.za/weekend-argus/cape-town-pride-fest-insensitive-13585036>
- <https://www.crimestatssa.com/>
- <https://heinonline.org/HOL/LandingPage?handle=hein.journals/geojintl44&div=44&id=&page=>
- <http://www.sweat.org.za/>
- <https://genderjustice.org.za/>

*The Dialogue Online*, is an online extension of SALO's national, regional and international consensus-building dialogues (typically workshops, seminars and small meetings) on Peace and Security, Development, SA Foreign Policy, Gender (including LGBTI rights), Natural Resource Governance, Human Rights and the rights of migrant communities through *weekly written articles and/or commentary*. It is a channel through which critical issues raised during dialogue events are synthesised and shared with wider audiences. By taking the dialogue 'online', the conversation is enabled to continue beyond the limits of space and time and to a wider audience.

Since SALO's central focus is peace and security, *Dialogue Online* articles focus primarily on this theme, but drawing attention to the nexuses with development, natural resource governance, human rights and gender, mediation, environment and climate change. Preference is towards articles that speak to international development and peace building policy and practice, raise awareness about conflict situations and the gender dimensions thereof and provoke fresh thinking and policy debate. Contributions are drawn from SALO's pool of experts, peace building and development practitioners, activists, academics, former and current diplomats and workshop participants.

***Please note that the articles represent views of respective contributors and do not necessarily reflect SALO's view or position.***

Interested contributors are welcome to email articles of 750 to 1000 words in length to [info@salo.org.za](mailto:info@salo.org.za) for consideration.

Please follow us on twitter [@salo\\_info](https://twitter.com/salo_info) and [#DialogueOnline](https://twitter.com/DialogueOnline) SALO for comments.

### About the Southern African Liaison Office:



The Southern African Liaison Office (SALO) is a South African-based not-for-profit civil society organisation which, through advocacy, dialogue, policy consensus and in-depth research and analysis, influences the current thinking and debates on foreign policy especially regarding African crises and conflicts.

[info@salo.org.za](mailto:info@salo.org.za)

[www.salo.org.za](http://www.salo.org.za)