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| --- | --- |
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| Portfolio: | **Womxn and Queer Empowerment** |
| Subject: | Year Report (2020) |
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UNIVERSITY OF STELENBOSCH – SRC MANAGERIAL REPORT

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# Constitutional Responsibilities

* Attend at least one SRC meeting per term
* Attend office duty sessions allocated by Secretary General
* Fulfil mandate promised by mission statement

# Portfolio Overview

## Changes from Last Year’s Term: The Expansion of the Portfolio

The Womxn Empowerment portfolio has been expanded to ‘Womxn and Queer Empowerment’ portfolio. This decision was approved by the SRC Executive members. The reason for this expansion was for 3 main reasons:

* Members of the queer community on campus constantly feel as though there is a lack of representation for their communities in terms of events and large decisions made on campus.
* Societies and safe space forums for queer individuals on campus, expressed that they were unhappy with how the burden of critical engagement and progression of queer communities fell on them as minority students, with minimal institutional backing. A platform that would cater for this was thus needed.
* Taking the status quo into account, the university is currently working on numerous projects that focus themselves at combatting gender-based violence (GBV). GBV is an issue that affects both womxn and queer individuals. It was thus logical that as this portfolio worked on ending GBV, they ensured that both womxn and queer bodies were represented.

The three reasons above highlight the demand for a queer empowerment portfolio. However, it is important to note that womxn and queer individuals face different challenges, because they are completely different communities. It is not my aim to unify their struggles. Instead, during the 2019/2020 and possibly the 2020/2021 terms, the womxn empowerment portfolio will use its power to build the foundations for the queer empowerment portfolio. Events and engagements on campus will specifically cater for the relevant communities separately, unless otherwise necessary. This expansion is to be a temporary expansion, until the current manager advises to their new incoming SRC members, that the portfolio is strong enough in its foundations that it will handle a split between ‘Womxn Empowerment’ and ‘Queer Empowerment’.

The members of this portfolio will be referred to as the “WAQE Executive” members. When referring to sub-committees, this will be in relation to residence and PSO related bodies, societies and other bodies that have goals and objectives similar that are to ours.

## New Vision

*“This portfolio aims to actively diminish institutional patriarchy, end rape culture and gender-based violence, encourage the upliftment of womxn, empower queer bodies, educate students on matters relating to gender inequality, and support overall equity on campus. The foundation of the portfolio is the encouragement of human dignity. It aims to provide a safe and equitable space on campus for all womxn and queer communities at Stellenbosch University, and the broader South African community.”*

The mission statement of this portfolio is an overall, long-term end-goal being worked towards. Its aims cannot be created overnight but must be worked towards continuously through various methods and steps. The goals of the portfolio have been worked towards in the following ways this term, of which further details explained under “Term Overview” later in this report:

* “Actively diminish institutionalized patriarchy, end rape culture”:
  + The university is one institution in which a lot of smaller bodies co-exist. This term has focused on unpacking the institutionalized patriarchy that exists in residence spaces, security policies, and accountability structures at the university.
* “End […] gender-based violence”:
  + Each member of the WAQE Executive committee continues to sit in a designated Anti-Gender Based Violence Working Group, in order to continuously raise concerns of students and ensure Internal accountability.
* “Encourage the upliftment of womxn, empower queer bodies”:
  + Our Instagram account is aimed at empowering individuals through motivational quotes, educational resources, and providing a sense of community by highlighting peers in the community that have empowered those respective communities.
  + Our #UNFILTERED series on our social media stories encourage students to voice their unfiltered thoughts, which in turn empowers them to have a platform to speak and holds us accountable.
  + Pride month was celebrated through daily educational content in our stories
  + Women’s week was celebrated through a variety of educational snippets and competitions
* “Educate students on matters relating to gender inequality”:
  + Our Instagram account continuously posts educational resources. A linktr.ee portal has been created in order to solidify a mix of educational sources we have shared with other resources we have been given through various other sources.
  + I have continuously made myself available to residences on campus to offer support and advice relating to gender-related matters
* “Support overall equity on campus”:
  + WAQE openly supports the Anti Gender-Based Violence Movement of Stellenbosch University
  + WAQE openly engages with topics related to social justice, and intersectional ideas such race (#BlackLivesMatter was particularly focused on this term)
* “Provide a safe and equitable space on campus for all womxn and queer bodies at Stellenbosch University and the broader […] community”:
  + Due to the effects of COVID-19, creating a physical safe space is near impossible. Resources have been shared via our Instagram account on ways to assist in making your home environment safer, ways to protect yourself in physically unsafe spaces, and ways that allies can create general safe spaces for gender-minorities.
  + Virtual safe spaces are being constructed with the assistance of Campus Security, our internal events coordinator, the Equality Unit, and the Safety and Security SRC Managerial portfolio.

# Budget Overview

The original budget for WAQE was as follows:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Total Allocated** | **R 19,023.33** |
| **Expenses** | **R 19,023.33** |
|  | |
| Slut-walk - Womxn's Week | R 5,000.00 |
| PULP Movie Night - Womxn's Week | R 2,350.00 |
| Lecture Video - Womxn's Week | R 590.00 |
| Guest Speaker - Womxn's Week | R 650.00 |
| Pride Day | R 9,433.33 |
| Discretionary Fund | R 1,000.00 |

The expenses that WAQE incurred during its term was vastly different to what was originally assumed, because most events were either cancelled, changed online, or reconstructed to fit a more suitable platform. The Expenses incurred are as follows:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Total Expenses** | **R 2, 932.15** |
|  | |
| WAQE – USDU Fund Raising Debate - Collab | R 237.00 |
| Women’s Week – Video | R 295.15 |
| Women’s Week – Book Competition | R 900.00 |
| Women’s Week – Art Competition | R 1,500.00 |

*For details of these expenses, please refer to section 9 and 10 of “Year Overview”.*

# Year Overview

## The Impact of COVID-19

Due to COVID-19, all of WAQE’s events have either been cancelled, postponed, or changed to a more suitable platform. All events for the rest of the year will be done virtually insofar as it is reasonable to do so. Due to the nature of the topics engaged with under this portfolio, open events have been tricky to plan because there are a number of technicalities behind the creation of virtual safe spaces. WAQE must do everything reasonably possible to ensure that members of various online communities cannot make spaces unsafe through inequitable comments and other problematic behaviour.

## WAQE Design

A picture containing food

Description automatically generatedA screenshot of a cell phone

Description automatically generatedA screenshot of a cell phone

Description automatically generatedThe WAQE Executive committee created a new design for the WAQE portfolio. This was done after a number of meetings and after consulting the university’s guidelines. Below are the designs for the WAQE logos:

## WAQE Instagram Accounts

WAQE launched two separate Instagram accounts on 14 April 2020. The womxn empowerment account (@waqe\_womxn) and the queer empowerment account (@waqe\_queer) are separate because they speak to completely different communities, and because this further allows for an easy handover when the managerial positions are separated.

### Instagram Accounts’ Objectives

Both Instagram accounts’ main posts have the same structure, albeit with varying themes, colours and designs therein. They follow a three-by-three aesthetic, by which each column focuses on a component of empowerment. These are:

* **Inspiration** - Empowerment through the recognition of community leadership:

Here, a sense of community is further created by acknowledging leaders of these respective communities. The fight towards an equal society occurs in many forms and largely exists outside of formal leadership structures. Stellenbosch students are thus recognized for the work that they do toward empowerment, so that they feel supported by the SRC, so that fellow students know who else they can rely on for content, so that these leaders feel celebrated and appreciated by the institution, and so that the student community as a whole feels less alienated from the SRC.

* **Education** - Empowerment through knowledge and resources:

Here, educational resources are shared. These resources either educate people by means of sharing facts or by sharing links to articles that assist in the creation of a safe and inspired society.

* **Motivation** - Empowerment through motivational encouragement:

Inspirational quotes are posted in order to encourage members.

### Instagram Account Biographies

Our account biographies include the following:

* **SRC Womxn (Queer) Empowerment at SU**: Our position within society as a body
* **Education. Encouragement. Support. Accountability**.: The values that govern the Instagram account, drawn from the overall objectives of our mission statement
* **Linktr.ee/waqe\_womxn (or Linktr.ee/waqe\_queer)**: A compressed link with all the shared resources, seeing as these are often suggested links that need to be further opened.

### Instagram Account “Stories”

Our account stories mainly include:

* Informative re-posts, that relate to the content on our pages, from other Instagram accounts.
  + We made it a point to report most posts by @antigbv\_su because we support the vision and objectives of this movement
* During more content-heavy and continuous threads, our stories are also used (see “Pride Month” below as an example).
* Fun and interactive questions for people to share their knowledge on certain pop-culture topics

### WAQE #UNFILTERED

WAQE #UNFILTERED is an initiative taken for students to better engage with the portfolio, by sharing their unfiltered concerns and suggestions. These are anonymously shared on our stories, and the portfolio then takes the initiative to assist the students in this regard, without giving any overly filtered and shallow response. It enables us to better gage what students want from us, without being alienated as SRC portfolios can sometimes become. Anonymously posting these replies shows that we publicly recognizing the issues that students have, whilst cultivating a culture of accountability and transparency. Our door is always open to suggestions and concerns, but reminders of our #UNFILTERED approach are given on our stories when there are specific societal uproars about specific issues, so as to provide a channel for these concerns.

Although the aforementioned aesthetic is used, sharing raw views and taking action is more important. We thus decided to disrupt our feed in order to engage on the following issues:

* Both accounts:
  + Black Lives Matter – A statement was released in the form of an unfiltered stance against the unfair discrimination of persons of colour
  + Virtual protest against GBV - #YouthDayShutdown
* Womxn’s Account:
  + The Silence of Men and Men’s residences – In response to a number of concerns by students as to the silence of men in relation to gender-based violence, an unfiltered thread was posted. This thread was a “guide” on how to be a better ally to the AGBV movement. It called out men’s residences for their silence specifically. This was reposted on the official Anti-GBV SU Movement’s Instagram account.
* Queer Account:
  + Pride – A re-affirmation that members of the queer community should feel proud every day, even outside of the “designated” Pride month.

## Matie Media

After the “revamp” of the portfolio (in respect to the logo, increased engagement and visibility, and Instagram page) Matie Media wrote an article about WAQE.

<https://www.matiemedia.org/src-revamps-portfolio-to-empower-women-and-queer-students/>

## Pride Month

Our original plan for Pride Month was to host Stellenbosch’s first Pride Day festival. Because this could not happen due to COVID-19 restrictions, our Instagram stories followed the Pride month calendar, and shared educational content on each queer identity. This often-included definitions, flags, histories, related organizations, and icons of that identified community. These have been highlighted in our stories for easy access in the future. We also encouraged students to follow events held by QueerUS society, who had amazing events planned in collaboration with similar structures at other universities.

## Working Groups

The WAQE Executive Committee sits on all Anti-GBV Working Groups. During this year, each working group created their final report to hand over to the Rectorate. We will have a meeting will be had next term to reflect on the outcome of these working groups and what we can do to ensure its sustainability.

## Residences/ PSOs and AGBV

WAQE is currently in the middle of an internal investigation on residences, their policies, their structures, and their cultures. Whilst we acknowledge the work of the aforementioned working groups, we have noted that a large degree of student perspective is missing. Thus, WAQE engaged with residences who are willing to engage, in order to get a better idea of the following:

* What residences have done fulfil the promises they made upon signing the Anti-GBV residence memorandums in September last year? Further, what can the SRC do to further assist them in achieving these goals?
* Where have student leaders in residences and PSOs felt as they have been limited in their efforts to combat GBV due to the failure of the university?
* What changes have they made that had a huge positive impact on the residence culture?
* Where do they believe the disjointedness between the values projected and the values received by students, lay?
* What mechanisms have been put in place in order to ensure sustainable cultural changes withing the residence spaces?

The objective of this investigation was to get a better insight as to the cultures of the residence spaces. It was a method to both hold residences accountable to positive change, whilst ensuring that residences had access to the SRCs resources to achieve these changes. At the end of this investigation, a report was written. This report has no direct formal weight to the residences, but will rather aid in the creation of the following:

1. A list of recommendations to all relevant structures in ways that they can assist student leadership structures and residences in having a more fruitful impact on students. This includes a list of policy concerns in relation to the university’s role in bettering residence culture.
2. A list of recommendations to incoming House Committee and other relevant student leadership structures on initiatives that have been tried by other residences. This will serve as a method to share ideas on ways to combat gender-based violence. This will hopefully include a list of general resources for them to reference when trying to orientate themselves in their new positions.
3. An internal recommendation as to the continuation of residence and PSO engagements with GBV related matters.

The first document listed above has been forwarded to staff members in the Transformation and the Centre for Student Communities. It has also been forwarded to the incoming SRC members Viwe Kobokane and Leone Wilkonson (Prim Comm Head) to ensure transparency and accountability in this process, seeing as my short term has ended.

The second document has been forwarded to the newly appointed Prim Committee Exec. It is my hope that this will be forwarded to all incoming Prims and that I will be invited to elaborate on these concepts at a Prim Committee setting. Due to the nature of this portfolio, I believe that it is fair to make it public to the entire institution so that no space can plead ignorance on small ways to make a big difference. As such, please refer to **Addendum A** of this report.

The third report has been forwarded to my successor and to the incoming Prim Committee head who has mentioned wanting to create an Anti-GBV ask team in the Prim Committee.

Residences that have not engaged with us in this initiative, or vis our social media initiatives, will be made note of so that there can be a track record. If other bodies struggle to get engagement from these residences, this can serve as proof of their lack of willingness to engage. This seems particularly fair considering encouragement for house committee members to engage with WAQE was also given by Pieter Kloppers as the head of CSC and by the Prim Committee.

## WAQE – USDU Debate

Given the context, WAQE had a collaborated debate on Instagram Live with the University of Stellenbosch Debating Union. This event was done to raise money for Solidarity Fund by donating R1 each for every viewer present, to engage on nuanced topics related to the queer-community, and to generally raise awareness. The motion was, “This house believes that the queer community should actively dismantle heteronormative social norms (e.g. the nuclear family, the importance of marriage, monogamy, etc.)”. It was a huge success. We donated R237 for 237 viewers. The comments were flooded with engaged viewers.

## Women’s Week

Women’s Week had a number of different events – one for each day of the week. This looked as follows:

* An educative series on the history and importance of Women’s Day
  + This was posted on our Instagram story and saved to our story highlights
* A book raffle for R300 Exclusive Book vouchers
  + To enter this competition, people had to comment a book title of a women author in the comments section of a post
  + This post had an empowering caption about why women are phenomenal
* A discussion on the intersectionality and why it is so important to recognise it
  + This was especially important because Women’s Day recognised the fight of women of colour, and was led by all races
* A panel discussion on “Feminism and the Way Forward”
  + The panellists of this discussion were some of the authors from “Living While Feminist – Our Bodies, Our Truths” which is a collection of written works, as edited by Jen Thorpe, that focuses on womanhood in South Africa. Hosted by myself.
* A discussion with the Equality Unit on Catcalling and microaggressions
  + This discussion was Hosted by the Equality Unit and Tamara Foyn presented on behalf of WAQE
* An art competition (KuKo Collaboration)
  + The theme for this competition was “Women – Still We Rise” as inspired by Maya Angelou’s poem and the known ability of women to always overcome. WAQE determined the top pieces based their interpretation of the topic and their technical abilities (as advised by an Art Honours student)

## Siykhula Series –Panel Discussion

As the Manager of WAQE, I was invited to form part of panel that led the discussion surrounding gender-based violence and the violence of gender. Specifically, I discussed how subconscious biases result in exclusive behaviour. Because this discussion was organised by the Human Resources department of SU and was mainly offered to SU staff, the examples and specifications of this conversation was directed to how their bias relates to policy decisions, student interactions, and how they may be conducting themselves within the working environment. This received great feedback and inspired point 3 of “Projects to be Continued”.

# Projects to Be Continued by Incoming SRC WAQE Manager

## Instagram Page

This has proven to be quite useful and received a lot of engagement from students on campus. However, please refer to point 3 of “recommendations”.

## Formalizing Memorandum Accountability

### Creating Accountability Mechanisms

The Anti-GBV Movement of SU has done amazing work on campus and around the country. One of these works included getting all residences and PSOs to sign a memorandum, which included numerous demands to be implemented to combat GBV within residences. Most residences also sent in a response promising to fulfil these demands, over and above the signed memorandum. Currently, no formalized mechanism has been established to measure the progress residences and PSOs have made with regard to the memorandum and response. Pressure must be put on all relevant bodies to obtain this accountability.

### Following Up on Previously Instituted Mechanisms

With regards to the above, and informal investigation and system was conducted (Please refer to point 8 of “Year Overview”). It is essential that this report be followed up. It is also essential that the parts of these reports relating to the lack of accountability processes in the university, the apathy generated by members y the CDC, and a pragmatic implementation of the best way forward regarding active accountability and repercussions of failure to improve spaces, be pushed forward with the utmost urgency.

## Staff “Orientation” Engagement

A formal proposal has been written to the university’s main Transformation Forum (ITC). This proposal includes the creation of an orientation week or formalized system of critical engagements for all members of staff. This is to promote a culture of staff members who are willing to learn and unlearn potentially problematic and exclusionary behaviour that is limiting the full potential and service of students. It is my hope that this conversation will continue beyond WAQE, but in collaboration with the head of Transformation in the SRC.

# Recommendations for the Incoming SRC WAQE Manager

## Stellenbosch PRIDE Day

Stellenbosch has never had a PRIDE day event. This is something that has been desired by students for years. QueerUs is very excited to assist with its establishment. Considering the circumstances surrounding COVID19, this unfortunately could not happen this year. It is a very important step towards generating inclusion, pride, empowerment, and creating a culture of support for queer people – who have constantly been made to feel as though they belong on the side lines.

## Create a Committee

### SRC Executive Committee

Policy, education, critical discussion, research, secretary, and marketing are huge roles that WAQE needs to be successful. Thank you to the committee that I served with. When creating a new executive committee, these portfolios should be prioritised instead of the portfolios I created. To my successor, please refer to the attached “WAQE Guidelines” for assistance on internal policies for the Exec

### General Committee

Please connect with the house committee and society structures as soon as possible. This is essential to ensuring effective communication with the rest of the campus. This exists in terms of communicating WAQE initiatives with the rest of the university and understanding the needs of most of the university.

## Investigating Wider Reach

Currently, WAQE’s main means of communication is through the Instagram account. This is very elitist. I acknowledge this platform’s failure and encourage the incoming manager to investigate more accessible means of investigation.

## Educating the SRC

Micro-aggressions and subconscious biases affect the decisions of all SRC members. It is extremely important for the incoming member to educate the rest of the SRC members on these nuances, so that this prerogative filters into all branches of the SRC.

# Important Contacts

## Outgoing Committee

* Manager: Grace Mngadi ([22671439@sun.ac.za](mailto:22671439@sun.ac.za))
* Secretary and Treasurer: Nicole Thompson ([24261793@sun.ac.za](mailto:24261793@sun.ac.za))
* Events Co-Ordinator: Tamara Foyn ([21556164@sun.ac.za](mailto:21556164@sun.ac.za))
* Public Relations: Amy Nelson ([23733861@sun.ac.za](mailto:23733861@sun.ac.za))
* Critical Engagements: Kgalalelo Rakgokong ([21706212@sun.ac.za](mailto:21706212@sun.ac.za))
* Project Assistant: Nailah Ebrahim ([23072776@sun.ac.za](mailto:23072776@sun.ac.za))
* Campus Engagement: Alexandra Osborn ([23721618@sun.ac.za](mailto:23721618@sun.ac.za))

## Other

* Niel de Kock: Prim Committee Administration 2020 ([nieldekock13@gmail.com](mailto:nieldekock13@gmail.com))
* Thulani Hlatswayo: Student Governance Coordinator ([thulani@sun.ac.za](mailto:thulani@sun.ac.za))
* Katlego Letlonkane: Employment Equity and the Promotion of Diversity ([letlonkane@sun.ac.za](mailto:letlonkane@sun.ac.za))
* Choice Makhetha: Director of Student Affairs ([choicemakhetha@sun.ac.za](mailto:choicemakhetha@sun.ac.za))
* Grace Mngadi: Chairperson of USDU ([usdv@sun.ac.za](mailto:usdv@sun.ac.za))
* Chante: Chairperson of QueerUS (0745744006)
* Kaylon Weppelman: Equality Unit’s Centre for Student Counselling ([18494463@sun.ac.za](mailto:18494463@sun.ac.za))
* Nadine Christians: Equality Unit’s Media and Marketing ([nchristians@sun.ac.za](mailto:nchristians@sun.ac.za))
* Fanele Ndebele: Centre for Student Leadership and Structures ([fanele@sun.ac.za](mailto:fanele@sun.ac.za))
* Leone Wilkinson: Incoming Prim Committee Chairperson ([20972830@sun.ac.za](mailto:20972830@sun.ac.za))

# Addendum A

*Below is an* ***exact*** *copy of the document of suggestions to residences on formulating a safer space:*

Dear Residence/ PSO Leaders,

*RE: SUGGESTIONS TO RESIDENCES AND PSO’S IN THEIR FIGHT AGAINST GBV*

The SRC Women and Queer Empowerment portfolio had numerous engagements with various residences’ and PSOs’ leaders. Thank you to all who participated. We have compiled a general comprehensive list of some ideas, suggestions, and initiatives that residences have implemented in their fight towards combatting combat gender-based violence. Some suggestions have been expanded by WAQE personally, to better express *how* to go about effecting change. These are by no means the only actions that should be taken; merely some ideas that were shared in our engagements, which we want to share with everyone. It is important that Stellenbosch University structures learn from each other and grow together. It is our hope that this will be shared with your incoming House Committee members and residents, so that you can collectively identify which approaches would be best to adopt in your spaces.

1. Critical Engagements

* There is no such thing as being too informed. Try to have as many engagement sessions as possible
  + Starting a conversation is the most important part. Have these discussions at your compulsory house meetings/ section meetings to try to involve more senior residents too.
* Host safe space forums
  + It is not necessary to constantly have externally facilitated discussion that is extremely theory heavy. Sometimes just offering a safe space for people to express and share their ideas and lived experiences is educational and therapeutic enough
* Discuss the difference between tolerance, ignorance, and inclusion
  + WAQE received a lot of queries about how to encourage discourse in your residence space, especially around sexuality, when some people “do not agree with it”. We tried to be as unbiased as possible to explain how to navigate around this, and hope that this breakdown helps:
    - We cannot force everyone to believe the same thing, but we must encourage everyone to respect people’s dignity, humanity, and right to equal opportunity
    - Generally speaking, the concept of “love the person and hate the misdeed” has proven to perpetuate exclusion. This is purely because the way it is being taught in spaces allows people to opt into ignorance. We cannot force everyone to attend PRIDE if it makes them uncomfortable, but they must understand what PRIDE is, its importance, and who forms part of it. In doing so we encourage tolerance without encouraging ignorance.
    - As leaders, the above is especially important, so that any events you plan and decisions you make, still cater for marginalised groups you might not necessarily “agree with”.
    - More so than tolerance, we should encourage inclusion. This goes beyond just knowing certain facts about a group of people, but actively understanding the struggles they face and why certain things you do in your house perpetuates micro-aggressions. Here, you are still not forcing anyone to “go against their beliefs”, but you still make sure that people feel seen and heard from who they really are. You do not see someone unless you see and understand all of their identity. The worst thing you could ever do is “ignore that part of them”, as this promotes exclusion and invalidates them as people. You cannot just tolerate people but work together and actively empathise.

2. General House Practices

* Use gender-neutral pronouns
  + This makes your res space more inclusive towards people whose gender is different to the general sex classification of your residence
* Try to push through your messages and educational information relating to inclusivity on all platforms and through all portfolios (such as social media, house group chats, house meetings, and even merchandise)
* Have an empowerment portfolio that focuses on empowering all marginalized groups
  + This includes identities relating to womxn empowerment, queer empowerment, religious empowerment, and POC and cultural empowerment
  + Remember that the intersectionality of these topics should always be considered!

3. Welcoming Practices

* Try to make sure that the social activities you have planned, are not gendered in any way
  + For example, learning how to ballroom dance should not be taught as “girls step back, and boys can step forward”, but rather “person A step back and person B can step forward”
* Reinforce your house values constantly
  + Sometimes you may be confronted with situations where someone expresses that they feel excluded by their fellow house mates on the basis of their identity. You may not always understand these micro-aggressions, but you should trust what they are saying to be true and ensure that the issue is resolved in line with your house values. There is not always a policy to cover every possible instance of exclusion, so general values should be relied on to determine how to move forward. (e.g. does the fact that no-one sits with the queer body during lunch hour properly reflect our value of family?). This will also help newcomers who may come from conservative backgrounds and may not know how to socialize with people who are “different” to them.
* Have as many critical engagement sessions as possible about gender-based violence, an introduction to the queer community, and positive masculinity
  + If you have a programme that is heavy with critical engagement, try to ensure that the mentors are given enough time for debriefing. It has been noted that newcomers tend to lose the message or become overwhelmed by the amount of new information being shared with them if they do not have time to actually reflect and engage with material. This is especially important for when facilitators have content-heavy (as opposed to more practical and engaging) sessions.
* Encourage your Culture and Vensters teams to explore some nuanced topics about gender and sexuality when writing your scripts, choosing your music, choosing your acting cast, and/or choreography.
* Please do not change planned activities without adequate consultation with the other party. Besides this being general decency, often times these changed events/ itineraries go against values being encouraged in other residences. Try to respect that and do not take offense if people opt to leave your event because they feel unprepared.

4. House Policies

* Use gender-neutral language in your Constitution, your Codes of Conduct, and your general policies
* Review your house policies for any gendered behaviours that are encouraged
  + By this we mean that you do not need to refer to what your residents do “as gentlemen” or what “lady-like behaviour” looks like. Generally respectful behaviour should encompass this already.
  + By this we also mean that you do not refer to how your residents should “treat ladies” or “act around men”. General respect and practices should be given to everyone equally. It does not need to be gendered or portrayed in a heteronormative/ cisgender fashion.

5. Leadership

* Call out your fellow leaders and correct each other
  + We should all be willing to learn, to unlearn, to do, and to rectify. Accept criticism and better yourself so that you can serve the house freely.
* It is useless to try to encourage inclusion in your residence if you are not encouraging inclusion within your leadership.
  + Have conversations about subconscious biases, how to be actively anti-exclusive, and how to be considerate of intersectional concerns when planning events
  + Leadership means service. Leadership means leading by example. You have to consolidate your vision to actively be against gender-based violence in pragmatic ways
* In all decisions and choices, you should ensure that there was accurate representation when that decision was made.
  + Representation means that POC individuals, queer individuals, women, and all other social minority groups have had the opportunity to fully analyse the decision and express their concerns. The concerns must not just be raised but must be heard and adapted accordingly.
* Beware of draining out “the voice”. By this we refer to residences often having one intersectional, diverse individual who they constantly ask about everything relating to inclusivity. This can be extremely draining for the mental health of said individual. By doing so, you are essentially asking them to hold the responsibility of inclusion alone. You are also asking them to educate you about their struggles constantly, which is often re-triggering for a number of reasons.
  + Educate yourself
  + Try to actively make everything as inclusive as possible and ask questions like, “we have tried to make this as inclusive as possible, where do you think we could improve?” rather than “make us inclusive” as a demand. This allows for collective accountability and less pressure on the individual you are asking.
* Men’s residences are encouraged to have women house committee members.
  + With this, we highly suggest giving them a broad portfolio that does not directly relate to “empowerment” or “diversity” or “transformation”. This once again ensures that they are not constantly being the lone voice that is encouraging inclusion. Having someone else hold that portfolio splits the burden of the responsibility of inclusion. There is thus also mutual accountability. This is, of course, a decision that can be made by the elected women HC themselves.

Conclusion

We all have a lot to learn and to unlearn. The important thing is that we constantly move forward. Take the initiative to combat gender-based violence and micro-aggressions in your spaces. Let us learn from each other and strive to always do better.

Thank you so much for being so willing to engage. Although my SRC term is ending, I am always happy to offer insight into any other concerns you might have. I will encourage my successor to do something similar next year, so that we can continue to share our ideas and promote progress. Please fell free to give me feedback on this initiative – I love constructive criticism. If you need clarity or elaboration on anything above, please feel free to let me know. It was amazing working with all of you. Thank you for trusting me!

Kind Regards,

Grace Mngadi

SRC 2020 – Womxn and Queer Empowerment

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