

Joint Statement by LGBTIQ+ Civil Society



Today, 16 June 2020, is Youth Day in South Africa and it is with immense outrage and great sadness that the LGBTIQ+ community mourns the death of Kirvan Fortuin, a young beloved, talented, and vibrant community leader. We condemn the violence that has robbed us all of their beautiful life and all the amazing possibilities that came with it. As a collective of LGBTIQ+ organisations in South Africa, we would like to extend our deepest condolences to Kirvan's family and loved ones.

Kirvan was a professional dancer, choreographer, LGBTIQ+ rights activist and community leader who danced their way onto international stages and into the hearts of many. Aged, 28 years, Kirvan still had their entire life ahead of them and now leaves us with a big void. Nowhere else will this void be felt more than in the Kirvan Fortuin Foundation that was established to support youth development through which they taught ballet, vogue and ball-room dancing to young children as the Creative Arts Director. In one of their online interviews, Kirvan stated persistently that their first language is dance which allows them to express the depth of their emotions and feelings. The universal language of dance was what Kirvan sought to instil and master in young people to build community.

Kirvan was stabbed to death on Saturday, 13 June 2020, in Macassar. A 14-year old girl has since been charged with their murder. The Western Cape Cultural Affairs MEC, Anroux Marais, stated that: "Kirvan was a true testament to how hard work and talent could open many paths to success. He was a rising star in South Africa, who had a promising road ahead of him." The MEC's words, ironically, acts as both a reminder of the continued struggle of Black youth and youth of Colour in South Africa whilst implicitly highlighting how national, provincial and local governments continue to fail young people in not creating enough safe and enabling communities. On top of this struggle, many questions prevail as to the extent to which Kirvan's sexuality and gender expression also played a role in them being the subject of violence. Kirvan's death is a reminder of the impact of the cycle of violence and the ways it drains our communities from so much potential and possibilities for positive change.

As LGBTIQ+ organisations, we recognise that what happened to Kirvan is not a stand-alone issue. It has happened to David Olyn, a gender-queer person from Ceres in the Western Cape, in 2015, where boys tied him up and burned him alive. It happened to Phoeboe Titus, a transgender womxn from

Wolseley in the Western Cape, also in 2015, where a boy stabbed her to death on her way back from the tuckshop. We still don't know what happened to Ayanda Denge... The extent of violence against queer people remains brutal and high.

We recognise that these are challenging times as we traverse the impact of COVID-19. We note that the cause of Kirvan's death is enmeshed with issues of child justice, gender justice, racial justice and economic justice in context of justice for LGBTIQ+ people. As LGBTIQ+ organisations we are committed to accountability of the perpetrator, community and policy-makers who together through act or omission contributed to Kirvan's death. At the same time we recognise the complexity of the current case and hope to further engage around what restorative justice and healing work looks like at this time.

As a starting point to broader conversations about restorative justice and healing work to address violence against LGBTIQ+ people and communities at large, we call upon:

1. The National Department of Social Development (DSD) to provide civil society with a comprehensive update on the status of the implementation of the LGBTIQ+ Action Plan;
2. The Western Cape Government to provide an understanding of what meaningful healing and social justice work it envisions to do in the community of Macassar as a result of the murder of Kirvan Fortuin; and
3. Our siblings in the Western Cape to join us in conversation about the significance of Kirvan's life, subsequent death and look at what this is reflective of in our communities.

As locally-based organisations Triangle Project and Gender Dynamix would like to invite the family to reach out to them for support. To get hold of these two organisations kindly contact:

Khanyisile Phillips at community@genderdynamix.org.za or 021 447 4794 and

Sharon Cox at health@triangle.org.za.

Yours in Solidarity,

LGBTIQ+ Collective

