

Taking action beyond #16DaysofActivism

 By Leigh Andrews

2 Dec 2019

Unfortunately, gender-based violence is a harsh reality of everyday life for the majority of South African women. Here's what's being done to not just take a stand but also act to end GBV this #16DaysofActivism and beyond, with UN Women's global #OrangetheWorld campaign.



Screengrab from the 'Republic of Sexual Abuse' (RSA) video.

16 Days of Activism is a worthy annual international awareness campaign that launched in 1991. It starts on 25 November and ends on 10 December, but some ask if it's enough and whether we can afford to act so slowly.



#16DaysofActivism: Can we afford to be acting so slowly?

Marc Lubner 26 Nov 2019



Awareness alone cannot create change; actions create change

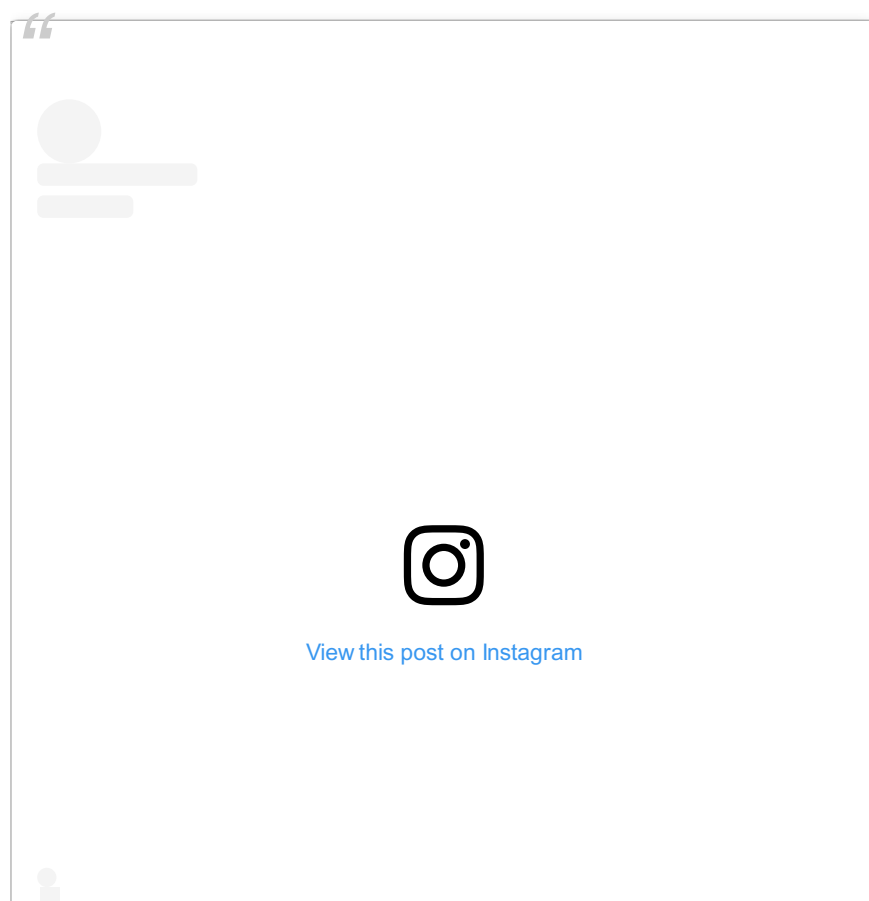
Because recent statistics have proven we still need to stand together all day, every day to turn the tide.

There's no denying that femicide is a global problem with devastating impact, but we feel it more intensely here in South Africa. We have one of the highest rates of sexual violence in the world – a problem that is likely understated because crimes of this nature tend to go unreported.

Added to this, about 3,000 women in SA were murdered in 2018 – that’s ***one every three hours***. The World Health Organization (WHO) confirms it’s more than five times higher than the global average.

Just running an eye over the local [trending hashtags](#) in this regard is a chilling snapshot of the current lack of safety:

#MakeitSafe #Enoughisenough #AmINext #JusticeForNene #iamNOTnext #WomenDontOweYouShit #StopKillingUs #FemicideinSA





We use this day to voice our outrage, our fear, our anger. There will be many hashtags, and powerful posts and sentiments today, and we wish the citizens that have taken to the streets are safe, respectful and respected. Though we will all continue with business-as-usual tomorrow, we will not forget. These tragedies should start a national conversation and provoke a shift in consciousness. We must do better, we must be better. . . . #ItStartsWithYou #WeAreHer #BeThoseMen #AmINext #NoToGenderBasedViolence #JustNo #EnoughIsEnough

A post shared by [Whaam Concepts \(@whaamc\)](#) on Sep 5, 2019 at 3:48am PDT

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So it's especially fitting that we pay attention to this year's #16DaysOfActivism theme, which launched at the end of November: #OrangetheWorld:

“ Thank you to everyone who joined [#GenerationEquality](#) today against gender-based violence.

Our activism will continue during the [#16Days](#) & every day until women and girls can live free from fear of violence.

We hope that you will continue to stand with us. [#orangetheworld pic.twitter.com/u9jiYkMhwS](#)— UN Women (@UN_Women) [November 26, 2019](#) ”

“ [#orangetheworld #16Days #resilientes](#) by Joana Choumali [#GénérationÉgalité #GenerationEquality #empoweredwomenempowertheworld](#) we are resilient women, we bend, we fall, we are torn & broken but we don't stay broken, torn, bent or on the floor. We pick up the pieces, we get up! [pic.twitter.com/LRPM6focGc](#)— Nabou Fall (@Naboufall) [November 26, 2019](#) ”

It's not a case of “all words, no action”, as many have already raised their voices to join protests to fight back for our safety.



#FairnessFirst: Stepping up to keep SA's females safe

Leigh Andrews 9 Sep 2019



It's such a drastic state that the Republic of Sexual Abuse (RSA) exhibition is currently underway until 10 December at the Zone, Rosebank.

It's a hard-hitting, impactful activation for People Opposing Women Abuse (Powa), that comes with its own national flag and anthem, which demands the nation's full attention.

Banking on behaviour change

The sentiment has proven so strong this year that numerous behaviour change campaigns took root before the #16DaysOfActivism, such as SA-based #ItStartsWithMe crowdfunding campaign, launched by Wesley Mathew, Meltwater's head of marketing for UKI and India, in association with Brothers For Life.

The campaign aims to raise R100,000 for programmes that seek to help change male-held beliefs and attitudes that contribute to violent behaviour against women.



#FairnessFirst: Taking a stand against GBV with Brothers For Life and #ItStartsWithMe

Leigh Andrews 14 Oct 2019



On the backlash around the #MenAreTrash hashtag and why it's so important for men to take a stand and not take offence when females say they don't feel safe, Mathew says:

“ First off, I understand that no one likes being called "trash" on a personal level – but, as with any statement, it needs to be viewed in context. South Africa is wounded, and that hashtag is the symbolic representation of a lot of pain, frustration and fear all rolled into one. To me, #MenAreTrash is a clarion call for action on the part of men – not an attack on my character as a person. I think guys need to employ empathy here, and recognise that this is not an assault on them, but rather the symptom of a nation that's deeply hurting. ”

Imagine what it's like, being a woman for a day...

That hurt runs deep, as the #EnoughIsEnough survey run by *Cosmopolitan* earlier this year found that 89% of female respondents have been sexually harassed by men.

“ Women deserve to be treated as nothing less than humans. We deserve to be treated as people with autonomy. We deserve to be respected. I hope for the day where we never have to fight against violence against women. A day where women are safe ! [#oranjetheworld](#) [#16DaysOfActivism](#) [pic.twitter.com/aMWMKTq493](#)— ebele. (@ebelee_) [November 25, 2019](#) ”

That's why the title has invited eight male celebrities to take a pledge that donates to the United Nations' global solidarity movement #HeforShe.



#AmINext is not a hashtag, it's the reality of life as a woman in South Africa

Andy Walker 3 Sep 2019



They're encouraged to "stand up against the BS that is the sexual harassment of women for #16DaysOfActivism."

But this is intended to raise awareness around gender-based violence (GBV) in South Africa beyond just 16 days.

Video unavailable

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[Learn more](#)

There's also the #NoExcuse five-year initiative, launched by Carling Black Label and Takuwani Riime, a consortium of non-governmental and civic organisations that focus on driving positive change amongst South African men last year.

It also initially ran during the last 16 Days of Activism, and is still going strong.



#NoExcuse: New movement to get Champion Men involved in tackling gender-based violence

30 Nov 2017



#FairnessFirst: Soweto Derby and *Grey's Anatomy* fight to end women abuse

Leigh Andrews 12 Mar 2018



Forget not the children

But it's not only adults at risk. A child also goes missing every five hours, and with 1,697 children going missing every year, the quicker you begin the search, the more chance there is of a positive outcome.



#FairnessFirst: Transforming SA's most vulnerable into outspoken PowerGirls change agents

Leigh Andrews 21 Oct 2019



That's why Missing Children South Africa (MCSA) shared a positive story every day in last year's 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence campaign.

This year, a partnership between the Centre for Learning on Evaluation and Results at Wits University, UJ's Africa Centre for Evidence, and the Institute for Security Studies has taken the torch further and launched an open source, [interactive evidence map](#).



#16Survivors for #16DaysOfActivism campaign launched

28 Nov 2018



The map easily identifies research about the effects of policies and programmes aiming to reduce the violence against women and children in South Africa, to help policy-makers understand what works to prevent violence against women and children.

Becoming global warriors against GBV

It may seem the sentiment is being most strongly felt locally, but don't forget this is a global movement, and everyone has the right to feel safe.

That's why the 'Life Isn't Always What is Seems' Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) revelation Instagram video by *Supergirl* star Melissa Benoist has led to the #StandwithMelissaBenoist hashtag trending, and the poem recited by Chanel Miller, AKA 'Emily Doe' – sexual assault survivor, artist and author of *Know My Name* - was so well received when she took to the podium at the recent Glamour Awards:

“



[View this post on Instagram](#)



A post shared by Melissa Benoist (@melissabenoist) on Nov 27, 2019 at 11:30am PST

”

“

”



[View this post on Instagram](#)

(2/2) 11.11.19 Thank you @glamourmag. An honor to be surrounded by flipping incredible women. I'll never forget that feeling. ☑️💎💎
Makeup: @sarahstaines Dress: @sachinandbabi Styled By: @shilpapnadella

A post shared by Chanel Miller (@chanelmillerknowmyname) on Nov 18, 2019 at 10:52am PST

“

”



[View this post on Instagram](#)



While writing *Know My Name*, I was constantly drawing as a way of letting my mind breathe, reminding myself that life is playful and imaginative. We all deserve a chance to define ourselves, shape our identities, and tell our stories. The film crew that worked on this piece was almost all women. Feeling their support and creating together was immensely healing. We should all be creating space for survivors to speak their truths and express themselves freely. When society nourishes instead of blames, books are written, art is made, and the world is a little better for it.

A post shared by Chanel Miller (@chanelmillerknownmyname) on Sep 24, 2019 at 10:56am PDT
Actress Alyssa Milano, the voice behind the original [#MeToo](#) movement.

Milano's voice keeps fighting for an end and raising awareness throughout the annual [#16DaysOfActivism](#) campaign:

“ *It's International Day to End Violence against Women.*

*Whoever needs to hear this today:
I hear you. I see you. I believe you.*

You're safe here. 💎💎 [#oranjetheworld](#) [#GenerationEquality](#) [pic.twitter.com/n1bcK1O3XG](#)— Alyssa Milano (@Alyssa_Milano) [November 26, 2019](#) ”

But imagine if we all do our bit, if we no longer stand back and leave it to the celebrities to lead the conversation.

Imagine if we did something like this:

“ *Hundreds of red shoes have been placed across a square in Brussels, Belgium. Each symbolises a woman who was killed* [#GenerationEquality](#) [#oranjetheworld](#) [pic.twitter.com/IPVXI3V4bW](#)— Bloomberg TicToc (@TicToc) [November 26, 2019](#) ”

We need to share our experiences, support survivors and do what we can to end the scourge. Our women and girls are the future.

ABOUT LEIGH ANDREWS

Leigh Andrews AKA the #MilkshakeQueen, is former Editor-in-Chief: Marketing & Media at Bizcommunity.com, with a passion for issues of diversity, inclusion and equality, and of course, gourmet food and drinks! She can be reached on Twitter at @Leigh_Andrews.

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