

# Green Door Women's Shelter rewrites African proverbs to shift the narrative on gender-based violence

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*"We can't change the past, but we can start a new story for all South African women." - Brown Lekekela, founder of Green Door*



## Rewrite our proverbs *write-off GBV*

Traditionally, our cultural heritage has not groomed men to be a safe haven for women. Whether African, English or Afrikaans, problematic proverbs remain steadfast, normalising the fate of the burdensome life that often befalls women in South Africa.

Green Door Women's Shelter believes that the parts of our culture that demean women need to be removed from tradition. Through the '**Rewrite our Proverbs. Write off GBV**' campaign, Clockwork has partnered with Green Door to actively cancel, edit and promote a whole new view of traditional women's proverbs, effectively disempowering antiquated toxic phrases and proverbs that we were all raised on, and steering the narrative towards equality and respect.

The campaign kicked off on the back of Women's Month to highlight the high number of toxic proverbs in South Africa with the hope of generating awareness about the national epidemic of gender-based violence. Through an extensive billboard, influencer and public relations drive, steering awareness back towards conversation change will hopefully help see the public how problematic some of our traditions have been.

When we change the way society views a woman's value, we can begin to repair deeply-rooted mindsets that ultimately

perpetuate the cycle of gender-based violence. A lot of work needs to go towards fixing the systemic belief systems that keep women at a disadvantage in the eyes of society, but through small changes being applied by establishments, such as the Green Door charity, we will ultimately find female empowerment becoming more recognised.

Green Door is a registered non-profit organisation that offers temporary shelter, emotional support, and counsel to survivors of rape and gender-based violence, with a strong footing in the Diepsloot community. The company was started by Mr Brown Lekekela, who facilitates an environment that provides holistic support through his centre. Survivors also reach out to Green Door for medical treatment, legal advice and personal empowerment through skills development programmes.

Lekekela's vision is to break the cycle of violence by empowering women with knowledge about their rights and the skills to lessen dependency on their abusers. This also involves educating men and youth on gender justice. He firmly believes that *"violence is a learned behaviour that can be changed"*.

Lekekela has been the recipient of significant recognition for his efforts, including the 2016 LEAD SA Hero Of The Month, the 2020 *Mail & Guardian 200 Young South Africans* and the 2020 *Giraffe Hero of the Month* awards. Yet, despite the phenomenal contribution to the community, the shelter receives no governmental funding. It is through corporate and private funding that the shelter is able to maintain the high standard of aid provided to the community.

Find ways to contribute to the Green Door initiative here: <https://greendoorshelter.org> and add your voice to ending the cycle of gender-based violence in South Africa.

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