

BREAKING BORDERS & BINARIES

...

WITH
FLAVARINA
NAZE
SHE/HER

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Flavirina is a 41-year-old transgender woman from Burundi. She came to South Africa to seek asylum since her country criminalizes trans and gender diverse persons. She left her home country for Cape Town. She struggled to get Asylum status and was assisted by different non-governmental organisations. She recalls the process as she highlights the problems of legal gender recognition that is not extended to refugees and asylum seekers in South Africa. This is creating complications for her especially in accessing gender affirming health care.

She further stresses the idolization of South Africa as a "beacon of hope" by trans gender persons in Africa. However, upon arrival her idolization of this country started to fade away as she started to be a victim of both transphobia and xenophobia. She further exposes various challenges and derogatory slurs that she has encountered in the streets of Cape Town. Flavirina received Asylum status, but she sheds light on the challenges she encountered- making numerous calls, standing in lengthy lines to only to be misgendered in the DHA office. Flavirina also highlights the struggle of getting legal gender recognition. She claims that her asylum status does not highlight her womanhood and she was told that ACT 49 does not include non-South Africans.

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"To be transgender is hard. But to be a black transgender refugee in South Africa is even worse."

- FLAVARINA NAZE

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Focus: Transgender and gender non-conforming people have a right to access legal gender marker services

What does it mean to be transgender?

Transgender people are people who doesn't identify with the sex assigned to them at birth. "Trans" is often used as shorthand for transgender. When we're born, a doctor usually says that we're male or female based on what our bodies look like. But for some people's gender identity – their innate knowledge of who they are – is different from what was assigned to them at birth. Most of these people describe themselves as transgender.

Gender Identity Sexual Orientation and Gender Expression

Gender Identity is an important factor that affects one's daily interactions. It is how individuals perceive themselves and what they call themselves and prefer to be called. Gender identity is the individual persons concept of who they are. Whether male, female, a blend of both, or neither. Gender Identity refers to the personal sense of one's own gender. This can either correlate with the sex assigned at birth or it may not. One's biological determinations are not always consistent with one's gender identity, the law needs to reflect such instances in progressive ways.

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Sexual orientation on the other hand refers to an inherent and immutable emotional, romantic and sexual attraction to other people. This attraction is independent to your gender identity.

Gender Expression refers to the external appearance of one's gender identity. This is how a person presents themselves on the outside. This is expressed through behaviour, clothing, voice or body characteristics. Gender Expression is the individuals expression of either femininity or masculinity which may or may not conform to societies held beliefs.

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